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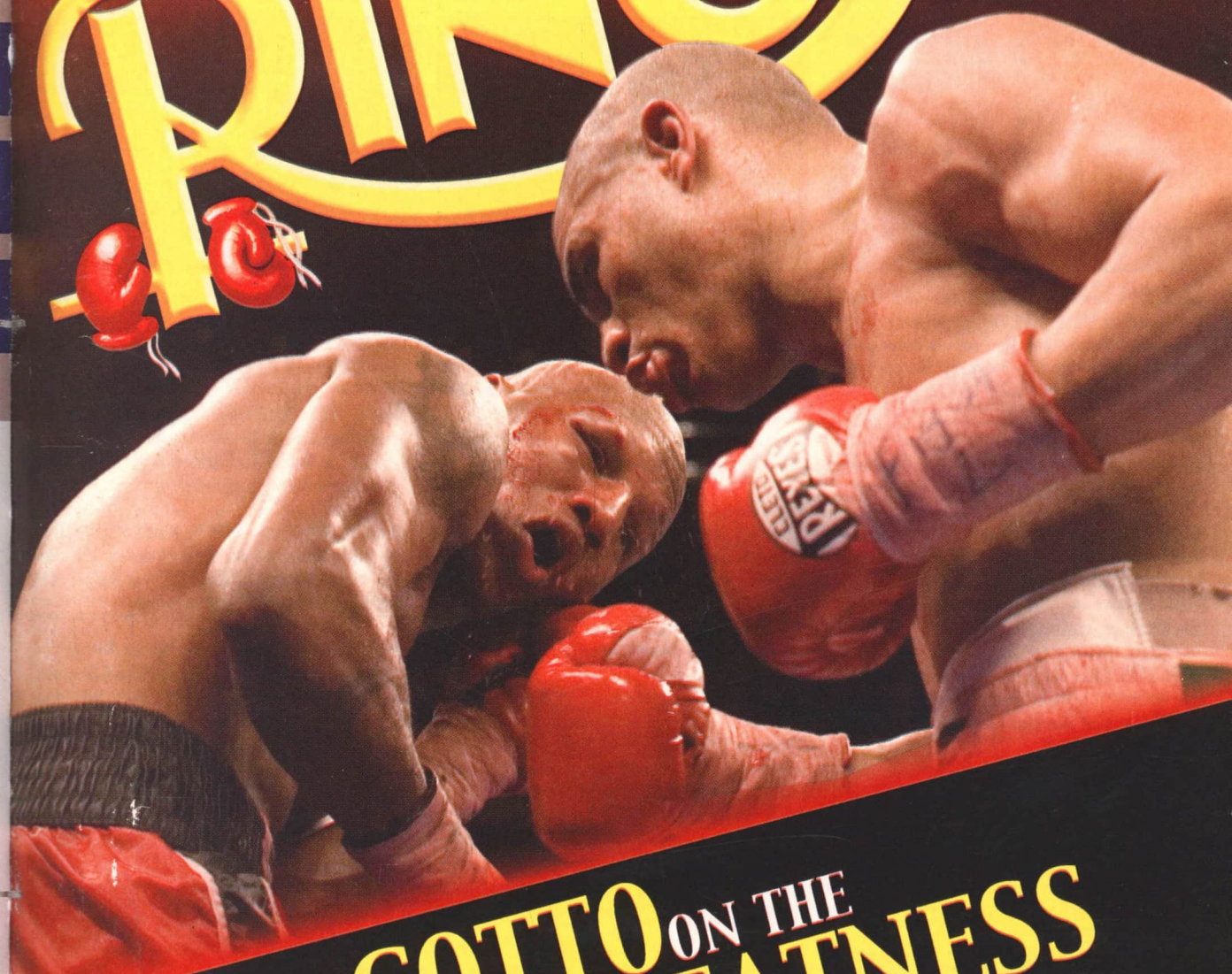

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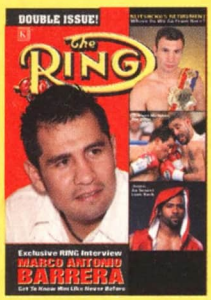

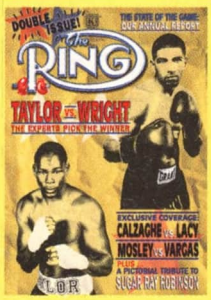

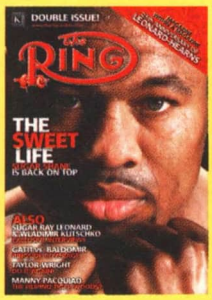

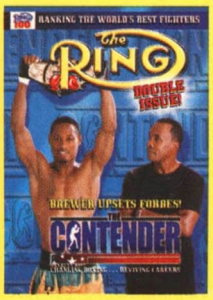

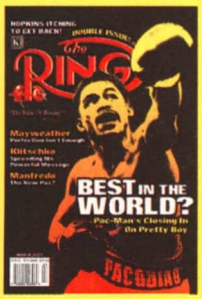

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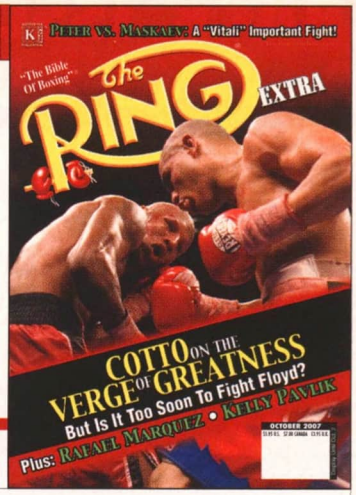

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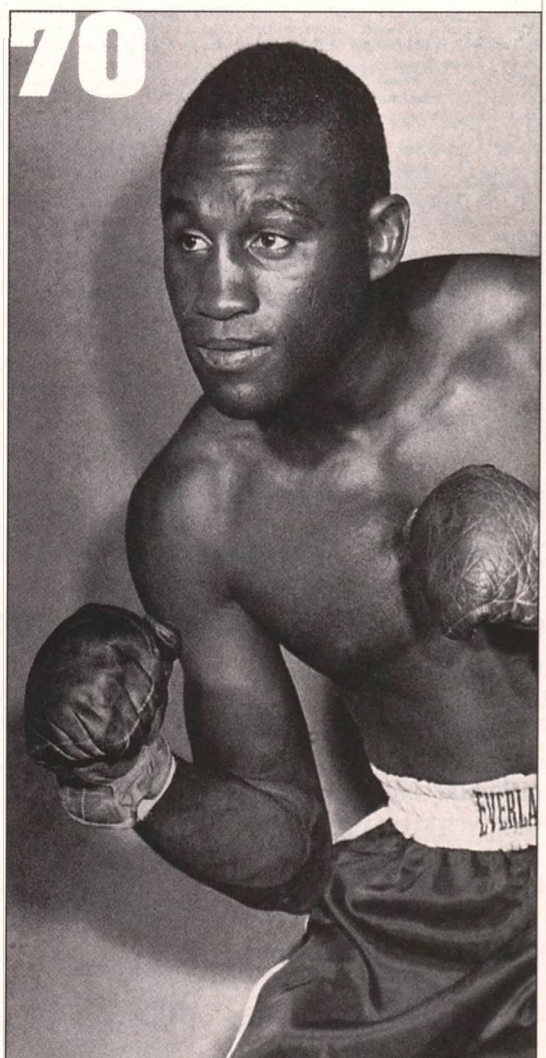

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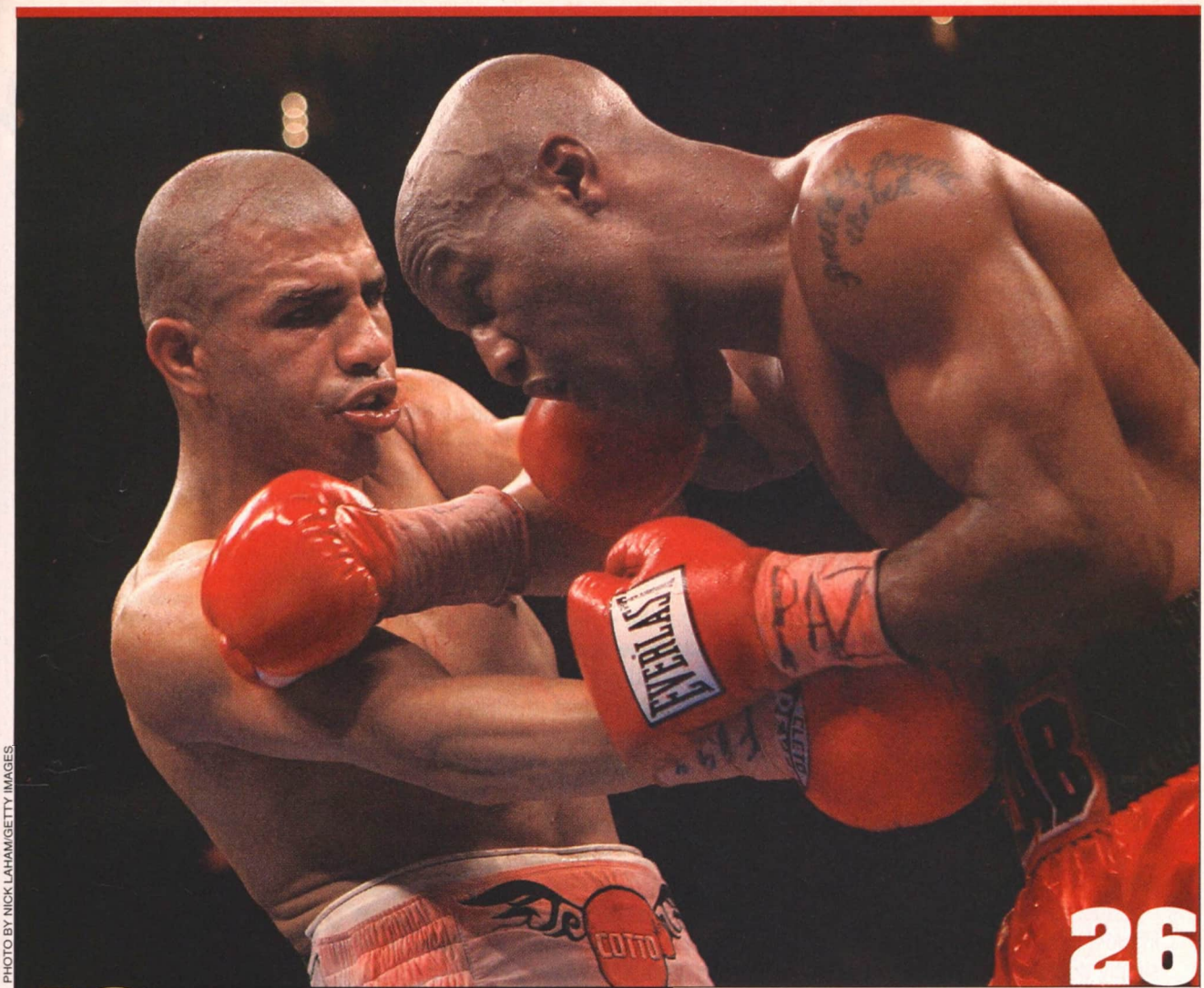

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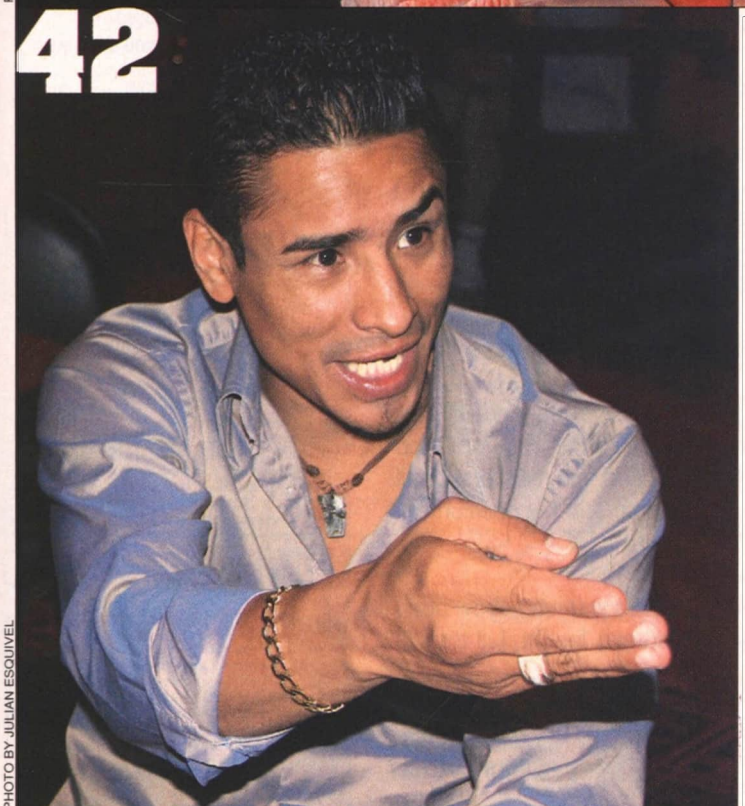

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The RING

It was no surprise when the toxicology report showed that Diego Corrales was drunk when he climbed aboard the motorcycle that carried him to his death on a Las Vegas highway. Considering his DUI history, it would have been a big shock if he'd come up clean.

Still, the fact that Corrales had more than three times the legal limit of alcohol buzzing around his brain when he crashed only served to further muddle the confused emotions he's always stirred in me.

Just like everybody else who saw him in the ring, I loved Corrales the fighter. How could you not? He was a kamikaze in boxing trunks, gleefully and maniacally sacrificing himself for the greater glory.

And he really cared about the fans, as much as any fighter I've encountered. Maybe more.

But it's always been impossible for me to forget the wife-beating conviction that sent him to jail in the middle of his career. It would have been nice to believe it was just an aberration, something he could learn from and get past. Besides, anybody can make a mistake, right? He served his time, paid his debt to society. Isn't that enough?

Maybe with an everyday citizen it would have been, but not with Corrales. The same inner workings that made him the fighter he was also made him beat a woman pregnant with his child and ride a high-powered motorcycle with a belly full of booze.

What if he'd killed somebody else instead of himself? How would we all have felt then?

If there's a lesson to be taken from the life and death of "Chico" Corrales, it is that in most cases you can't have one without the other. In the main, well-adjusted folks simply don't act the way Corrales did in the ring. In fact, I believe that most fighters are, to one degree or another, emotionally wounded long before they find a salvation, of sorts, in boxing.

That's right, folks, a large number of our fistic heroes have serious mental issues. Boxing is the only thing that's keeping most of them on a semi-even keel. The majority have demons driving them, especially when the going gets rough, and it doesn't matter whether that rough patch is in the ring or on the outside.

The rub is that the mental skill set for a fight is a far cry from one required during the rest of their lives, and most can't turn it on and off like a switch. The demons are always there, more a part of them than the moves they've learned and the training they've endure.

All too often, the more extreme the pathology, the better the fighter. And so it was with Corrales.

To me, perhaps the greatest irony is that while his death has been, and will continue to be, a nightmare for his loved ones, it might have been a blessing for Chico. He was broke, owed the IRS, was estranged from his wife, and, maybe worst of all, probably finished at a big-time fighter. I've seen a lot of fighters in his position and there is seldom a happy ending.

Corrales escaped before the real hard times hit.

A tragedy for those left behind, the death of Diego Corrales was somehow poetically fitting in a larger sense: He went out the way he lived and fought, full throttle, balls to the wall. Can anyone ask for more?

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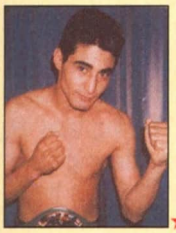

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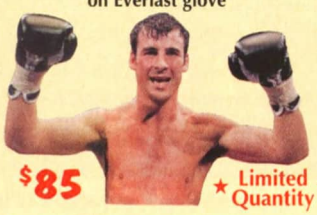

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★ Vito Antuofermo
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★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
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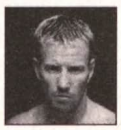

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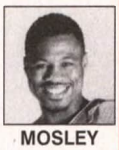

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"Bad Bennie" Makes A Comeback

Bennie Briscoe stood at the top of the stairs that led to the banquet hall at Romano's Caterers in Northeast Philadelphia, shaking hands and accepting congratulations from the arriving crowd. Even if you hadn't seen the former middleweight contender since his final ring appearance, in 1982, he was instantly recognizable, head shaven, broad, puncher's shoulders still evident beneath his light gray suit. And although a smile had replaced the permanent scowl he wore inside the ring, you could tell that this was one 64-year-old you wouldn't want to mess with.

The occasion was the 73rd annual Pennsylvania Boxing Hall of Fame awards, sponsored by Ring One of the Veteran Boxers Association. Briscoe has made precious few public appearances since he retired from the ring, and, initially, there had been some fear that he might not show to up to accept his plaque. But there he was in the flesh, the personification of the term "Philadelphia fighter," an uncompromising warrior who seldom took a backward step, never sat down between rounds, and refused to shake his opponents' hand until the fight was over.

Fans who might be worried that they won't get another glimpse of "Bad Bennie" for another quarter of a century will be delighted to know that his likeness will soon become a permanent fixture on the Philly boxing scene, thanks to superfan John DiSanto, creator of the phillyboxinghistory.com website, and local sculptor Carl LeVotch.

DiSanto, who will host the first Philly Boxing History Awards in October 2007, wanted a distinctive, Philadelphia-oriented award to present to the honorees, and immediately thought of Briscoe.

"I could have named the award after any one of a long list of people," DiSanto told *Philadelphia Daily News* boxing writer Bernard Fernandez, "but Bennie is the ultimate Philadelphia fighter. I went to see Bennie and Karen [Briscoe's wife] and I pitched the idea. He and Karen gave me permission to use his name and likeness, which was the first step."

Next, after a brief search, DiSanto recruited LeVotch to fashion a 14-inch statue of Briscoe, a clay prototype of which was unveiled at the banquet. Each year, starting this October, several bronze casts of the sculpture (called, naturally, the Briscoe) will be awarded.

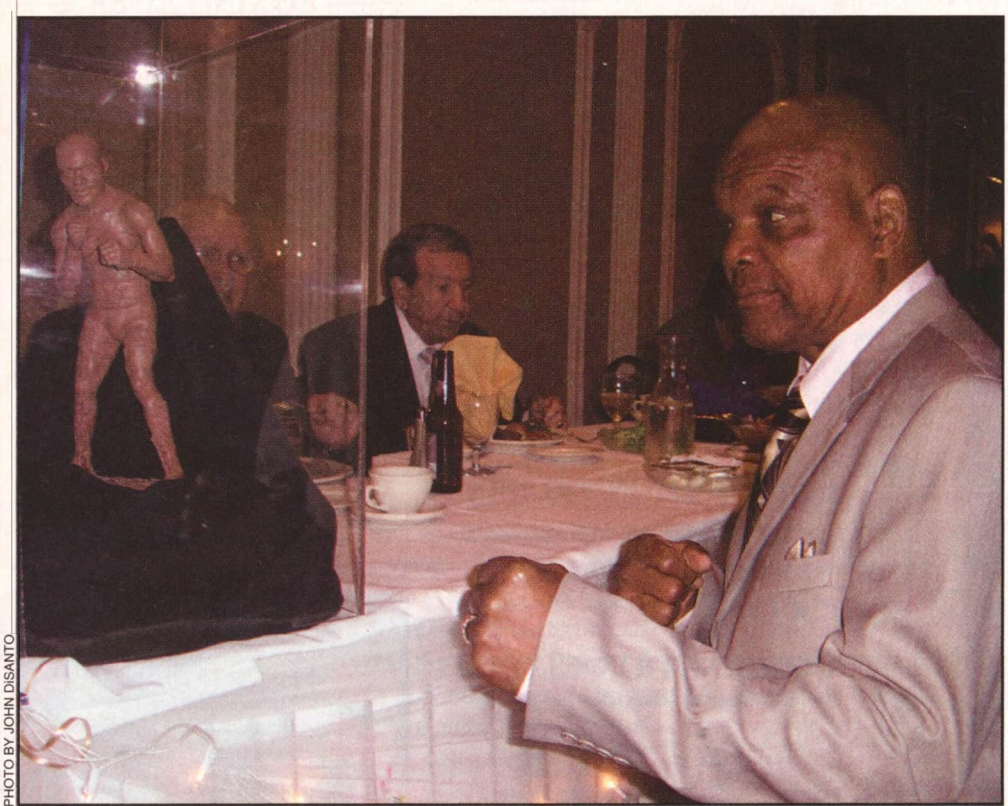


PHOTO BY JOHN DISANTO

Briscoe squares off with his statue

"We're going to honor a particular Philadelphia fighter, and also a great fight in Philadelphia boxing history," said DiSanto. "I'm also considering honoring a current fighter."

There is a statue of movie boxer Rocky Balboa located on the grounds of the Philadelphia Art Museum, which has always struck local boxing fans as ironic, considering how many great fighters have come from the City of Brotherly Love. Now, at last, there is going to be a statue of a real Philadelphia fighter, one that will perpetuate the legacy of the city's great fights and fighters while also honoring the man who embodies that tradition.

—Nigel Collins

IBHOF 2007: A Year of Change And Controversy

It was not your typical four-day celebration at the annual International Boxing Hall of Fame Induction Weekend in Canastota, New York, this June. While the Class of 2007 living inductees included such undeniably worthy fighters as Roberto Duran, Ricardo Lopez, and Pernell Whitaker, controversial WBC President Jose Sulaiman was also inducted, in the non-participant category.

Sulaiman's legacy will always be tainted by the dubious practices that permeate many of boxing's alphabet organizations, such as exorbitant sanctioning fees, highly suspicious ratings, and attempts to influence results. Ironically, Buster Douglas who was the near-victim of one of Sulaiman's most notorious actions (when he tried in vain to reverse Douglas' kayo of Mike Tyson) was also in attendance this year.

Sulaiman did not win many new friends during his interminably long induction speech, which brought catcalls and boos from several in the crowd who thought it would never end. Indeed, a couple of fighters on the stage appeared to be dozing off, and Whitaker even held his face in this hands and shook his head as Sulaiman rambled on. Duran finally gave Jose the hook by hugging him and steering him away from the podium as the crowd cheered the end of the soliloquy.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Duran gives thanks ... that Sulaiman's speech is over

For the second consecutive year, there was no pro boxing show at nearby Turning Stone Casino due to an ongoing dispute between the New York State Athletic Commission and the Oneida Indian nation, which owns the casino, as to who should sanction and run the boxing cards held at the casino. Last year, the NYSAC suddenly wanted a piece of the action, while the Oneida Nation claims its own commission has autonomy. The state commission would not budge, so Turning Stone chose not to stage fights at all.

Also conspicuously absent were enough active pros training on the IBHOF grounds. Maybe their schedules conflicted; it was not made clear. A rumor circulated that Joe Mesi was to train, but he never materialized at the outdoor gym. More of today's current fighters need to step up and become involved, since some of the retired boxers who were regular attendees are starting to age and die.

There is also no longer a "Breakfast Of Champions" at the local Fire Hall, perhaps because the fighters are too tired from the previous night's banquet to make it.

Another negative change is the growing aggression of the security staff, which prompted several visitors to say they would not return.

One thing that hasn't changed is the opportunity to see boxers outside of the usual context. There was former welterweight champ John H. Stracey, hair dyed blond, singing "Sweet Caroline" to the fans and referee Frank Cappuccino's rendition of "My Way."

At Graziano's Restaurant and Lounge, the chief hangout on Induction Weekend, former journeyman "Irish" Pat Lawlor was circulating from table to table, hawking DVDs of his fights, including his victory over Duran. Meanwhile, retired cruiserweight Lou Benson, of Baltimore, lobbied for the future induction of former bantamweight and featherweight champion Harry Jeffra, who also hailed from Charm City. Benson certainly has a point, as Jeffra's resume is comparable to that of some fighters already enshrined.

The good feelings between the fans and many of the attending fighters that makes the Hall of Fame weekend so special has survived, but all involved in organizing the event would do well to remember what "Sweet Pea" Whitaker told the fans during the induction ceremony: "It is we who salute you; you are responsible for our success, and *we* applaud *you*."

—Mike Greenhill

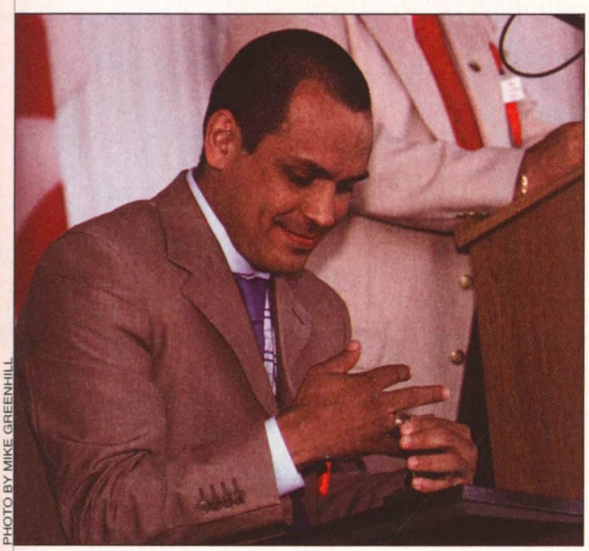


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Lopez checks out his Hall of Fame ring

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By William Dettloff

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
5/18/07	Shaun George W 8 Richard Hall	ESPN2	lh	C	B-	D+
George looks good when he throws punches; he might consider doing it more frequently						
5/18/07	Zahir Raheem W 10 Christobal Cruz	ESPN2	l	C+	C-	F
Why does Raheem keep getting TV dates? An average episode of The Price Is Right *is more violent*						
5/19/07	Kelly Pavlik KO 7 Edison Miranda	HBO	m	B+	A	A-
Good for Steve Smoger for letting this go as long as it did; in an important fight someone is supposed to have a headache at the end						
5/19/07	**Jermain Taylor W 12 Cory Spinks**	**HBO**	**world m**	**A**	**C+**	**F**
Don't blame Spinks—he did what he's always done and was never this dull; it was Taylor who made this a bore						
5/23/07	Bones Adams W 10 David Martinez	ESPN2	f	C-	C+	C
Humans rarely fall back in love with anything, never mind fighting; we'll see if Adams is different						
5/25/07	Lamont Peterson KO 7 John Brown	ESPN2	jw	C+	C	C
Brown is the human equivalent of a pencil nub: worn down and stubby, but highly useful						
5/25/07	Anthony Peterson KO 9 Luis Ernesto Jose	ESPN2	l	C+	B+	C+
Who else thinks Anthony would knock out his brother?						
5/30/07	Kevin Finley W 6 Brandon Wooten	ESPN2	m	D	B	B+
Proof that a pair of chubby white guys who aren't great fighters can put on a hell of a good scrap						
5/30/07	Marcos Ramirez W 12 Adailton DeJesus	ESPN2	jl	C+	A-	B-
Mrs. Ramirez sure looked different at ringside than she did in the sympathy piece beforehand, didn't she?						
6/1/07	Eric Ortiz KO 11 Jonathan Perez	Telemundo	jb	B-	C-	C+
This would be as good a time as any for Ortiz to have a rematch with Solis or Viloria, no?						
6/1/07	Alejandro Hernandez Tech Dec. 9 Marlon Marquez	Telemundo	fl	C+	B-	B+
Hernandez proves some things in this one, which was harder than expected; Marquez a pleasant surprise						
6/1/07	Timothy Bradley W 10 Donald Camarena	Showtime	jw	C	B-	C+
We don't know if he's a future champ, but Bradley is coming along						
6/1/07	James Kirkland W 10 Ossie Duran	Showtime	jm	C+	B	C+
Who else was hoping Duran would stay down after that first-round knockdown?						
6/2/07	Habib Allakhverdiev DQ 4 Roberto Acevedo	PPV	jw	C-	C	D-
If Acevedo had punched instead of holding constantly, he might have gotten some business done						
6/2/07	Robert Stieglitz W 8 Marlon Hayes	PPV	lh	C-	D	C+
Hey, Bobby, how about a bodypunch?						
6/2/07	Shamone Alvarez W 12 Jose Luis Cruz	PPV	w	C+	B-	C
Alvarez is nothing that special, and don't let anyone convince you otherwise						
6/2/07	Sultan Ibragimov W 12 Shannon Briggs	PPV	h	C	B-	F
Let's get this out of the way ahead of time: For his next fight, Briggs will come into the ring with tuberculosis						
6/8/07	Giovanni Segura KO 1 Daniel Reyes	Telefutura	fl	B-	B	B-
Segura makes quick work of Reyes in a big step up; the kid is close to being ready for a title shot						
6/8/07	Jean Pascal KO 10 Christian Cruz	ESPN2	sm	C-	D-	D+
Cruz tough, but if he were any slower, his nickname would be "The Glacier"						
6/8/07	Herman Ngoudjo W 12 Randall Bailey	ESPN2	jw	C+	B+	C+
Ngoudjo may or may not have deserved this, but give him credit for taking Bailey's right hands all night						
6/9/07	Chad Dawson KO 6 Jesus Ruiz	Showtime	lh	B-	D	C-
Okay, Chad, you got your gimme out of the way: How about a live contender next time out?						
6/9/07	Antonio Tarver W 12 Elvir Muriqui	Showtime	lh	B	C+	C+
Let's cut to the chase: Tarver against Dawson with the winner getting the winner of Hopkins-Wright						
6/9/07	Yuri Foreman W 10 Anthony Thompson	HBO PPV	jm	B+	B+	F
Further proof that repeated clinching and holding should be banned; this was terrible						
6/9/07	Humberto Soto KO 7 Bobby Pacquiao	HBO PPV	w	B-	C+	B-
Pacquiao almost pulled this off with the right hook; still, it's going to take a top guy (Manny?) to beat streaking Soto						
6/9/07	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 3 Grover Wiley	HBO PPV	jl	B-	C-	D+
Junior ready to step up; the winner of Gatti-Gomez would be good						
6/9/07	Miguel Cotto KO 11 Zab Judah	HBO PPV	w	B+	A-	B+
Give Judah credit for hanging in there as long as he did, Cotto becoming the king of long, hard beatings						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net;Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino; Versus

Fortunate 50

Oscar De La Hoya is the second-highest earning American athlete this year, according to *Sports Illustrated*, which rated the 50 top-earning American athletes. "The Golden Boy" will reportedly haul in $55-million, falling a distant second to top-earning Tiger Woods. The golfer will earn an incredible $112-million in 2007.

Here's the interesting point: De La Hoya made more for performing his actual sport than any other American athlete, yanking in $53-million from his record-breaking May pay-per-view fight with Floyd Mayweather. The closest American athletes to that performance figure didn't make half that much (Yankees Derek Jeter and Alex Rodriguez came in at $22-million, followed by Minnesota Timberwolves basketball star Kevin Garnett at $21-million).

Mayweather just missed cracking the top 20, coming in at 21, with a $20,250,000 figure.

Though the misinformed mainstream sports media is wrong when it brays that boxing is dying, they have a point when it comes to endorsement dollars. Even De La Hoya, with all of his marketing muscle, is a minor player in this regard.

It wasn't that long ago that prime-time fighters such as Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, and George Foreman commanded decent endorsement dollars—especially the lovable "Big George." But even boxing's top product endorsers made much less than Woods, who will take in $100-million in endorsements ($12-million for playing golf), and Phil Mickelson, another golfer, is expected to bring in $47-million from endorsements. In comparison, De La Hoya's endorsements added up to a relatively paltry $2-million.

One of the major factors involved in the scarcity of endorsement dollars for boxers is the lack of network TV exposure. Woods and Mickelson receive prime attention for playing in prestigious network-broadcast events like the Masters and U.S. Open. Many of the products they endorse—cars, golf gear bearing their names—advertise during commercial breaks of those events.

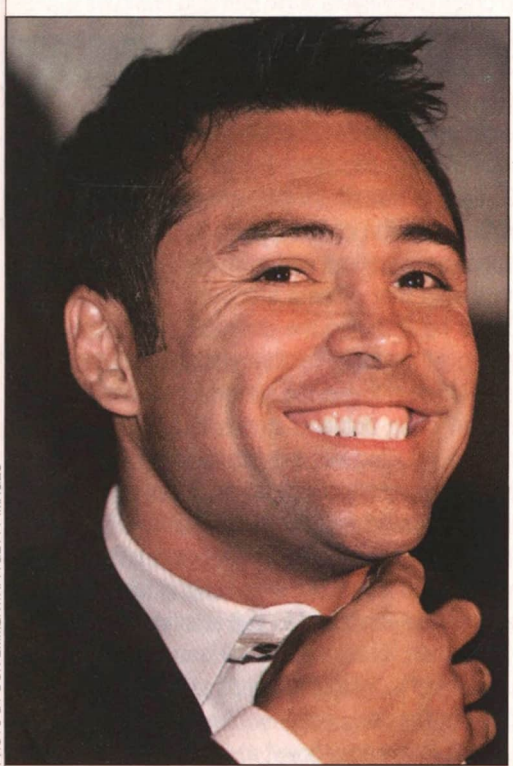
All elite fighters now appear on pay-pay-view or cable, limiting their audience.

Mayweather-De La Hoya drew an all-time best 2.1 million PPV buys. But three times as many sports fans will watch the final of the Masters on a Sunday afternoon without spending a dime on anything but the electricity to power their TV sets.

Today's elite fighters may get into the ring three times a year—at most. Garnett, Kobe Bryant, and Shaquille O'Neal are on prime time national TV at least 50 times a year.

As long as prime time boxing continues to be the purview of subscription cable and PPV, even the most famous boxers will have to earn the bulk of their money in the ring.

—Joe Santoliquito



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Oscar has 55 million new reasons to smile

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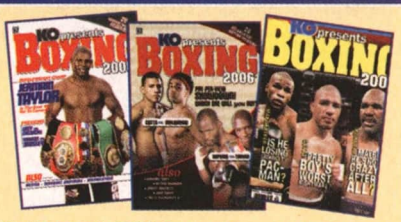

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Outside the Ropes

Following several months of rumors and what appeared to be an eventual change of heart on the part of the HBO brass, longtime color commentator **Larry Merchant** will not be leaving the subscription cable network after more than 29 years of service. Originally, it was widely believed that Merchant would be replaced by **Max Kellerman** on *World Championship Boxing*. But the day before the June 9 Miguel Cotto-Zab Judah HBO pay-per-view, HBO announced that it had reached an agreement with Merchant for a new contract. Kellerman, who had been working as the analyst on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*, will share duties with Merchant, working alternating *World Championship Boxing* shows ... Former heavyweight champion **Muhammad Ali**, 65, has been awarded an honorary doctorate of humanities from Princeton University. Ali was honored for his contribution to humanitarian efforts and his athletic achievements ... **Golden Boy Promotions** expanded its shareholder base by adding **Brener International Group, LCC**, an investment vehicle of Gabriel Brener, one of the top Hispanic business leaders in the United States ... The **World Boxing Association** donated $21,751 to **HODERA**, a Nicaraguan addiction rehab facility where **Alexis Arguello** was treated a few years ago ... In early-June, 20 former and current **World Boxing Council** titleholders spread cheer among 300 children undergoing intensive medical treatment at La Raza Hospital in Mexico City as part of the WBC Cares program. Among the fighters encouraging the children to "get up from the canvas and fight" were retired Mexican legends **Ruben Olivares**, **Pipino Cuevas**, **Lupe Pintor**, **Chiquita Gonzalez**, and **Daniel Zaragoza**, along with reigning titlists **Rafael Marquez** and **Edgar Sosa** ... New Jersey Judge **Harriett Klein** dismissed claims of tortuous interference brought by **Bobby Bostick Promotions** against **Main Events** "in its entirety." Bostick claimed Main Events had interfered with his alleged contract rights to **Kermit Cintron**. The welterweight contender is suing Bostick, claiming Bostick Boxing Promotions breached its obligation to him and did not pay him substantial monies claimed due ... The British Boxing Board of Control has denied former WBC and WBA heavyweight titleholder **Tim Witherspoon**, 49, a license to box in Britain. Witherspoon, who last fought in March 2003, had hoped to launch a comeback in Birmingham in July ... Former WBC bantamweight titleholder **Carlos Zarate**, 56, suffered a heart attack on May 24 in his native Mexico. He was rushed to hospital after collapsing but is expected to recover ... Toxicology test results have shown that former lightweight champion **Diego Corrales** was driving drunk with more than three times the legal limit of alcohol in his system when he crashed his motorcycle and died on May 7 ... In early-July, former IBF lightweight titleholder **Paul Spadafora** was back in jail, in Erie, Pennsylvania, for allegedly violating parole. Spadafora spent seven months in state prison and six months in a prison boot camp for shooting **Nadine Russo** in 2003, and was released in June 2006. According to reports in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and the *Erie Morning News*, a custody dispute over Spadafora and Russo's 2½-year-old son, Geno, has led both Russo and Spadafora to seek a protection from abuse orders from the court. Russo has accused the boxer of recently dragging her by her hair, cutting off some to make her appear less attractive, and choking her. Spadafora countered by claiming Russo tried to run him over in a car while he was walking his dog, threatening to crash her vehicle while carrying Geno as a passenger, and to cut off Spadafora's penis while he was sleeping. "I think he's okay," said **Mike Acri**, Spadafora's promoter. "I don't think he did any of this" ... Former IBF and WBC junior flyweight titleholder **Michael Carbajal**, 39, was released on bail after being booked on suspicion of threatening a Phoenix, Arizona, police officer and a liquor violation. Police said that officers stopped Carbajal because he matched the description of a man who left on foot after threatening to kill people at a nearby home. Officers found the retired boxer walking in a vacant lot with an open bottle of rum and questioned him. Carbajal, who was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2006, was initially cooperative, but became agitated when police questioned him about the incident. When the reporting parties declined to press charges, officers told Carbajal he was free to leave, but after starting to walk away, "He turned around and continued to yell at officers," said Sgt. Joel Tranter. "He then threatened to kill one of the officers, which led to his arrest" ... Trouble keeps piling up for former featherweight contender **Scott Harrison**, 29, who was accused of assault following a brawl at El Oxigeno brothel in Alhaurin el Grande, a town in southern Spain.

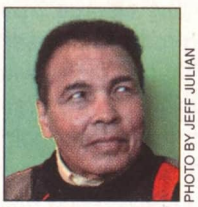


PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN

Ali: Awarded honorary doctorate

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN

Cintron: Object of legal battle

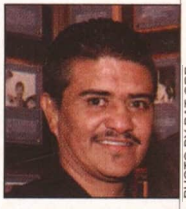


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Carbajal: Busted in Phoenix

Quotable

"I think MMA will help boxing. Promoters and fighters won't want to be outdone by MMA, so they're going to step up to the plate and make better fights. The best will fight the best, and once you get that going, boxing will be back."

—Two-division former titleholder and current trainer Buddy McGirt, giving Lisa Scott of fightnews.com, his take on mixed martial arts' perceived threat to boxing

"I'm just delighted and ecstatic that she's out of jail. She's a character. She's what America is all about. People that stand out from the crowd and, hey, you know, keep on keepin' on."

—Don King, commenting on Paris Hilton's temporary early release from prison after serving only three days of a 23-day sentence for probation violation

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended June 11, 2007

Heavyweights: Chris Byrd re-enters the ratings at nine, replacing James Toney (ninth last issue), while Vladimir Virchis debuts at 10, taking over for the idle John Ruiz.

Cruiserweights: Steve Cunningham (third last issue) trades places with Krzysztof Wlodarczyk (second last issue), after Cunningham's decision victory over Wlodarczyk in Poland. Everyone from six to nine advances one place, thanks to the decision Marco Huck (eighth last issue) scored over Vadim Tokarev (fifth last issue), who drops to nine.

Light Heavyweights: Tomasz Adamek (sixth last issue) exits to campaign at cruiserweight, advancing everyone rated seven through 10 up one place. Stipe Drews enters at 10.

Super Middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: No changes.

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: Miguel Cotto (third last issue) jumps to number one, thanks to his impressive 11th-round TKO of Zab Judah (who stays at five). Cotto's advancement drops Antonio Margarito (first last issue) and Shane Mosley (second last issue) one spot each.

Junior Welterweights: Andreas Kotelnik (10th last issue) switches with Herman Ngoudjo (ninth last issue), based on Ngoudjo's questionable decision over Randall Bailey.

Lightweights: Jesus Chavez (seventh last issue) comes out due to inactivity, moving everyone from eight to 10 up one place. Chavez' departure makes room for Anthony Peterson to debut at 10.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: No changes.

Junior Featherweights: Gabula Vabaza (eighth last issue) exits due to inactivity, moving Steve Molitor and Takalani Ndlovu up one space each. Vabaza's departure makes room for Miguel Roman to enter at 10.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: Luis Perez (fifth last issue) moves up to bantamweight, moving everyone from six through 10 up one place. Z Gorres debuts at 10.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior Flyweights: Giovanni Segura vaults to two on the strength of his first-round knockout of Daniel Reyes (third last issue), who drops to five. Juan Landaeta (second last issue) departs after suffering his third straight defeat. Omar Nino (fourth last issue) and Edgar Sosa (fifth last issue) each move up one place.

Strawweights: No changes.

Pound-For-Pound: Miguel Cotto debuts at 10, based on his exciting performance against Zab Judah. Cotto replaces regressing world middleweight champion Jermain Taylor.

The RING®
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight/Junior Middleweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
4. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
6. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
7. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
8. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
9. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Miguel Cotto**
    Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended June 11, 2007

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Stipe Drews enters the light heavyweight rankings at 10

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 48-3 (43)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 28-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 23-0-1 (17)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 46-1 (34)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 21-0-1 (17)
7. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
8. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
9. **CHRIS BYRD** Las Vegas, NV 40-3-1 (21)
10. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 23-1 (19)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 35-2-1 (22)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER** Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
5. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 25-3-1 (15)
6. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
7. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 38-2 (28)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-0 (19)
9. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
10. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 39-0-1 (20)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
3. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 20-2-1 (13)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 26-0-1 (19)
5. **NICKY COOK** England 27-0 (15)
6. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
7. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 27-7-3 (10)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 23-3-1 (12)
9. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 59-5-1 (37)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 28-3 (19)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: RAFAEL MARQUEZ Mexico 37-3 (33)

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 26-2 (18)
2. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 41-4 (31)
3. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 30-1-2 (19)
4. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 50-2-1 (41)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 31-1 (28)
6. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 23-0 (18)
7. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 28-1 (16)
8. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 23-0 (9)
9. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 27-3 (17)
10. **MIGUEL ROMAN** Mexico 21-0 (15)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 22-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 55-3-2 (40)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 19-0-2 (6)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 20-2 (16)
5. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 34-5 (29)
6. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 67-9 (44)
7. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-5 (20)
8. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-1 (10)
9. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 27-1 (18)
10. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 19-1-1 (7)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 33-3 (22)

1. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 20-1 (10)
3. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 37-2 (27)
4. **DAVID HAYE**
England 19-1 (18)
5. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 26-1 (20)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 26-3-1 (18)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 19-0 (13)
8. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 16-0 (12)
9. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 23-1-1 (16)
10. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 21-5 3(18)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 47-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 26-0 (16)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 25-4 (18)
3. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 40-3-1 (24)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 45-11-2 (30)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 25-0 (16)
6. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-3 (25)
8. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 28-2 (15)
9. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15)
10. **STIPE DREWS**
Croatia 33-1 (13)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 43-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-0 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 28-3 (22)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 22-1 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-3-1 (13)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 24-1 (18)
6. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 19-0 (16)
7. **CARL FROCH**
England 21-0 (17)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 23-1 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 30-0 (23)
10. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 22-2-2 (14)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 27-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-3-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 23-0 (18)
3. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 31-0 (28)
4. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 28-2 (24)
5. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 27-2 (12)
6. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (41)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 20-0 (14)
8. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 33-9 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 25-2 (11)
10. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (4)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 30-0 (25)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 34-4 (24)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-4 (37)
4. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
Argentina 43-10-6 (13)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-5 (25)
6. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 27-1 (25)
8. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 31-2 (19)
9. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)
10. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 32-0 (24)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 42-0 (30)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 55-7-1 (47)
2. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 35-1-2 (20)
3. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-2-1 (18)
4. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 44-8-1 (29)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 35-1-1 (20)
6. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
7. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 26-0-1 (10)
8. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 22-1 (12)
9. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Germany 27-2-1 (12)
10. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Canada 16-1 (9)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 34-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 32-0 (16)
2. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-3 (25)
3. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 32-1-1 (17)
4. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 30-5-1 (24)
5. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 24-1-1 (14)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (16)
7. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 24-2 (13)
8. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 22-0 (20)
9. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 19-2 (13)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 23-0 (17)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 44-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 47-3-1 (35)
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 63-5 (42)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 27-0 (17)
5. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-5 (34)
6. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 22-0 (22)
7. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
8. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 42-5-2 (26)
9. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-2-1 (12)
10. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 24-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 31-2 (17)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 30-2 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 9-1 (5)
4. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 31-3-2 (12)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 33-2-1 (24)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 46-4-1 (35)
7. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 30-6 (20)
8. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-2 (12)
9. **PRAMUANSAK POSUWAN**
Thailand 36-1-1 (20)
10. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 26-2-1 (14)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 65-2 (34)
2. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 28-0 (22)
3. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 24-0-2 (15)
4. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-1 (17)
5. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 30-4-1 (15)
6. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 21-2 (8)
7. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 36-1-1 (28)
8. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 30-2-2 (19)
9. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
10. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 15-0 (11)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: HUGO CAZARES
Mexico 25-3-1 (19)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 24-1-2 (18)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
3. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 27-5 (14)
5. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 38-5-1 (30)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
7. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-2 (12)
8. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 16-0-2 (8)
9. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 34-6-1 (20)
10. **MUNETSUGU KAYO**
Japan 15-2 (8)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 28-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 21-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-5-5 (31)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-3 (7)
6. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-1 (18)
7. **ERIBERTO GEJON**
Philippines 23-1-1 (13)
8. **PORNSAWAN KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand 19-0 (14)
9. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 23-0 (8)
10. **RONALD BARRERA**
Colombia 20-3-1 (12)

By Jeff Ryan

Semi-Jermain Event

The honeymoon is officially over for Jermain Taylor. And he certainly can't say that we didn't extend him the courtesy of a late checkout. Taylor's basking in the sunshine began back on July 16, 2005, when he got married to the middleweight title. His wedding gift was the split decision he got over Bernard Hopkins that night, and the union was consummated with HBO's broadcasters having simultaneous orgasms as Taylor exited the ring with the belt. This was going to be a new era in the 160-pound ranks, we were told. And the cheerleaders were right. It's a middleweight reign unlike so many others.

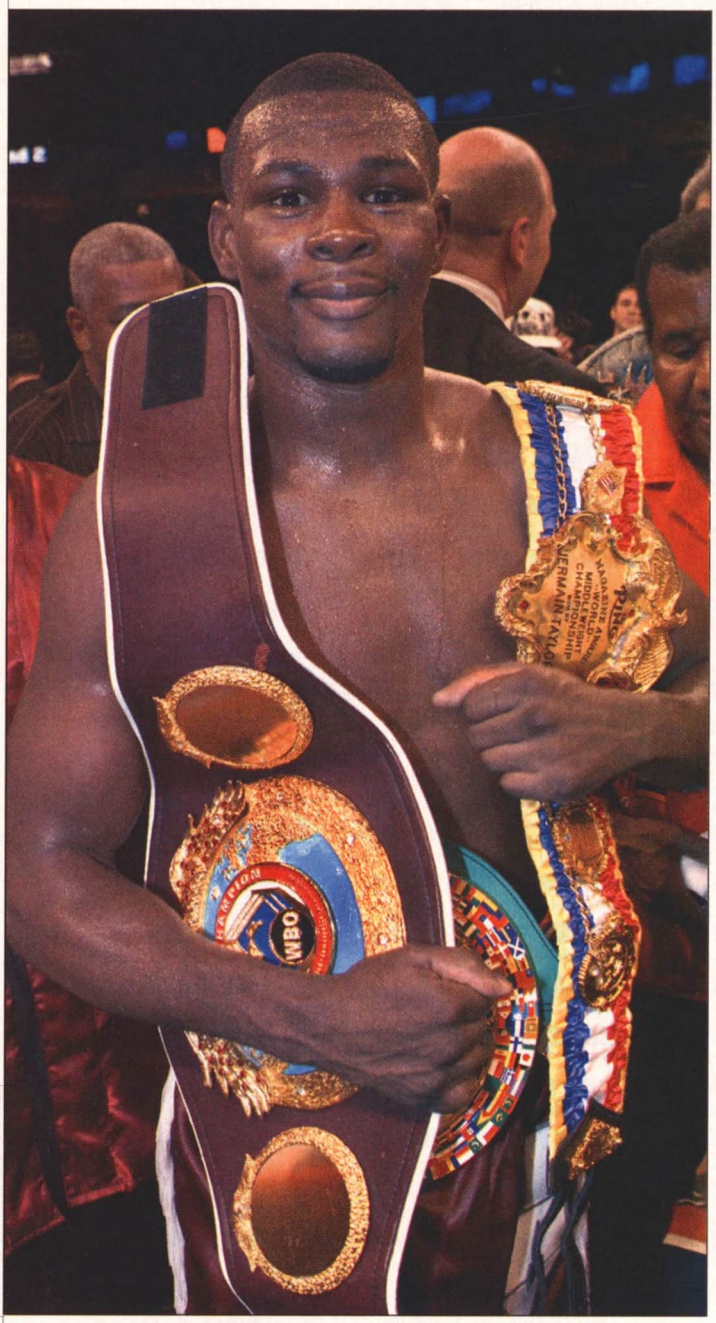


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

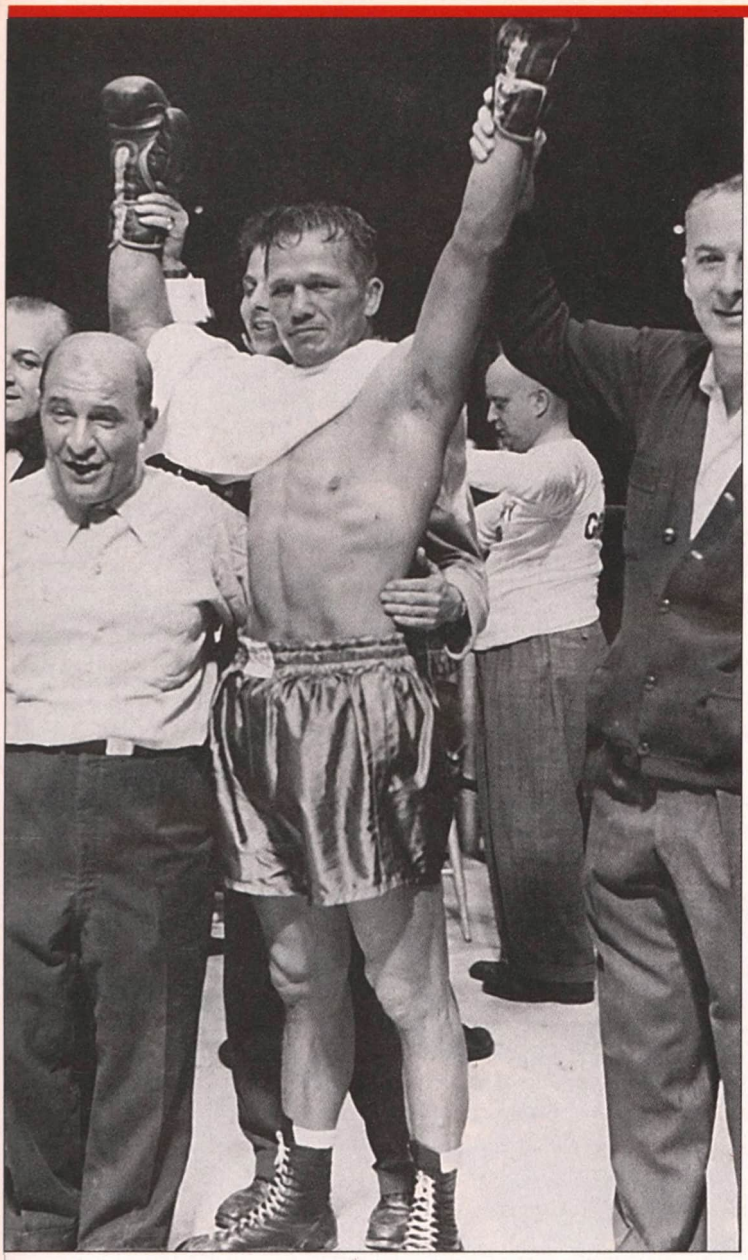
Although he's managed to hold on to his belts, Taylor has regressed

It's a reign that has featured more close calls than the crowded skies over LaGuardia Airport, more escapes just in the nick of time than David Blaine has made on network television, and is as desperate for a power surge as California during a rolling brownout. The latest predicament slithered out of by our escape artist was a split decision win over Cory Spinks in May. It was Taylor's fourth successful title defense. Uh, fret not, B-Hop. There don't figure to be 16 more.

As champion, Taylor reminds me of one of those pro wrestling titlists who fails to dominate but still hangs on to the hardware. The grappler manages to keep the belt because he never gets pinned or submits, though one night he retains the crown only because he's thrown out of the ring and can't get back in, and another night he wins because his opponent clotheslines the referee. Taylor's four defenses have been a close decision over Hopkins in a rematch, a draw with Winky Wright, a points win over Kassim Ouma, and the split verdict against Spinks. The Ws on Taylor's record stand for, *"Whew!"*

Sure, there have been plenty of champions in the alphabet era who've gotten by with prayer and luck as much as skills and effort. But Taylor isn't some WBC cruiserweight champion everyone knew couldn't possibly last at the top. Nor is he a jitterbugging chess master whose fists couldn't bust a potato chip. He's a gifted, fundamentally sound, strong, versatile 28-year-old ruler of boxing's "Black And Blue Division," the fistic equivalent of football's NFC North. It has traditionally been one of the toughest neighborhoods in the game, all glass-strewn and graffiti-covered dark alleys with no parks or playgrounds anywhere to be found.

It's the place where pools of blood and sweat (though never tears, not with these guys) formed at the feet of Sugar Ray Robinson, Tony Zale, Rocky Graziano, Jake LaMotta, Carlos Monzon, Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns, and Hopkins. Where badasses who'll never make it to Canastota—Bennie Briscoe, Cyclone Hart, Iran Barkley, Mustafa Hamsho, John Mugabi, Julian Jackson,



"The Man Of Steele" didn't wear fringe

Vito Antuofermo—fought with more grit and guts than some of the enshrined immortals of other weight classes. It's on this hallowed ground that Taylor has failed to score so much as a knockdown in his four defenses.

The sub-par outings are frustrating to watch because Taylor started out so promising. He got right in Hopkins' face before their first meeting and threatened him with great harm, the equivalent of slapping a tiger in the snout. Taylor then forced Hopkins to respect him in the ring, using his sharp jab and speed to make the ever-confident "Executioner" look unsure of himself. Taylor didn't let the talk of an unjust first decision rattle him, as he won the rematch. And he and his promoter, Lou DiBella, followed the two Hopkins fights with a defense against Wright. Three toughies in a row, the kind of schedule Leonard, Hearns, and Hagler used to keep.

Now, though, it's clear that Taylor has regressed, not progressed, since winning his title. He went toe-to-toe with Wright, but seemed uninspired against Spinks. What can he do to turn things around? A few suggestions:

1) Look the part: A middleweight champion is supposed to be the kind of gladiator who'd wage war in a loincloth, not a pretty boy who wears trunks that look like they were made from one of Wayne Newton's stage curtains. Hey, Jermain, fringe on the trunks is for fringe contenders. If somebody had offered to jazz up Zale's trunks with a little fringe, they no doubt would have been forced to remove a sewing machine bobbin from a very private part of their body.

2) Stop fighting little guys: Both Ouma and Spinks are smaller men who moved up to challenge Taylor, and he looked unimpressive against both. Unless the little man is a superstar, looking ordinary against him is poisonous to the bigger man's reputation. Worse yet, Spinks had been knocked out at welterweight three fights ago, but although Taylor wobbled him a few times, he couldn't put the challenger down. Middleweight vs. junior middleweight is a no-win situation Taylor needs to avoid.

3) Adopt a right-wing agenda: Maybe there's more to trainer Emanuel Steward's take on Taylor's problems than simply a need to pull any excuse possible out of the air. Steward has worked with Taylor for three fights now, all of them against southpaws. Nobody likes to face lefties, or ever looks good against them, yet Taylor has now tried to solve their puzzle in three-straight outings.

Steward thinks a southpaw style nullifies Taylor's premier weapon, the jab, and disrupts the champion's timing. That's one more reason for the Taylor camp to accept the challenge of undefeated Kelly Pavlik, whose value will never be higher than it is now, coming off his stunning knockout of Edison Miranda.

4) Blast somebody out!: Pavlik. Arthur Abraham. Felix Sturm. *Anyone.* You get the impression that if Taylor was a schoolyard bully, his idea of shaking a kid down for his lunch money would be to allow the victim to set up a no-interest payment plan. If you're the middleweight champ, you get down off your toes, load up on your punches, take more chances, and not worry about getting whacked in return. If that's not Taylor's style, fine. Then he can do us all a favor by dropping six pounds, or gaining eight, and campaigning in another weight class. Let him outpoint Joe Calzaghe at 168 pounds and we'll give Taylor his props. If he goes the distance with another middleweight, though, we might all become badminton fans.

Middleweight was once the home of Raging Bulls, Cyclones, Bad Bennies, Hit Men, Blades, Beasts, and Men of Steel. It's where smirks got wiped off faces and resin got wiped off downed fighters' gloves as referees looked into their glassy eyes. Ah, those were the daze. ■

By Ivan Goldman

"Street Fighting Man" Versus "Tiptoe Through The Tulips"

They used to accuse Oscar De La Hoya of fighting guys who were too small or too old or weighted down by various constricting chains that couldn't be seen through the rose-colored glasses of his teeny-bopper fans. But the objections were swept aside in the goggle-eyed stampede for tickets.

Now comes Jermain Taylor, whose handlers were desperate to somehow keep him sitting on the middleweight throne, but looked around the division and saw dangerous, rising contenders calling out a Jermain whose skills appeared to be freakily atrophying in his late-20s, as though he were one of those victims of an odd disease with an unpronounceable name that turns you into a codger 40 years too soon.

So the desperate handlers poked around dance studios and came up with Cory Spinks, a guy who couldn't put people away when he was a welter, which explained his 36-3 (11) record going in, and who'd competed at junior middleweight for only two fights before the enterprising Taylorites lured him out of reverse gear long enough to sign a contract, pronouncing him a bona fide middleweight challenger, suitable for HBO prime time.

Back during his short, unspectacular junior middle career, Spinks, whose fighting style is a cross between a tango and a fox trot, had eked out a majority decision over Roman Kamazin and managed to dominate 38-year-old Rodney Jones. Before that, Spinks spent over seven years throwing powder-puff

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Taylor and Spinks create a stinker

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Pavlik and Miranda gave the fans what they wanted

punches and skedaddling in even lower weight divisions.

Taking in 6½ rounds of all-action-all-the-time Edison Miranda versus Kelly Pavlik followed by 12 rounds of Taylor versus Spinks was like watching The Rolling Stones pound out "Street Fighting Man" followed by Tiny Tim and his ukulele performing "Tiptoe Through The Tulips."

How did they ever get away with such a con job of a title defense? Well, when you're putting together a main event, once you sign for a chunk of HBO cash you can count on enough working capital to hire crafty publicists and marketing specialists well-schooled in refusing to see what's really in front of them, or, more specifically, what will be in front of Taylor.

Also, by installing Miranda and Pavlik on the undercard, they were guaranteed somebody would lose, thereby eliminating at least one of those two dangerous challengers from championship contention for a year or two. But the strategy backfired because Pavlik-Miranda reminded fans that once there were middleweights like Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Tommy Hearns. This is something the spin-masters needed erased from public memory, kind of like those weapons of mass whatcha-ma-callits.

No one who takes on Bernard Hopkins (twice), followed by Winky Wright can be accused of always looking for a soft touch. The trouble is, Taylor fails to impress, and, according to some scorers, also loses from time to time. When you think of take-charge guys who go out there to pour on the action, his name doesn't come to mind.

And the handlers' story that they couldn't find one bona fide middleweight willing to fight Taylor for the championship and all the opportunities it would shower on a successful challenger looked about as believable as the closing arguments from O.J.'s defense team.

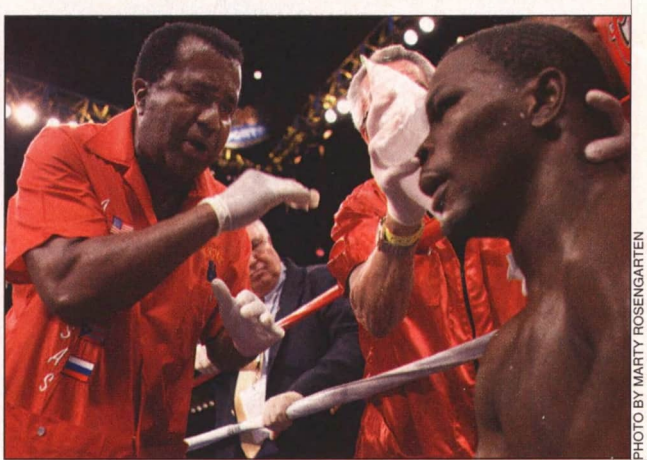


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Is Taylor even listening to Steward's advice?

Almost as bad as watching the borifying Taylor-Spinks two-step was having to hear Taylor complain afterward that Spinks ran all night. That's like hearing the French police inspector in *Casablanca* declare he was shocked there was gambling going on in Rick's. Team Taylor picked Spinks *because running all night is what he does.*

Back when young De La Hoya was hearing the kind of criticism Taylor hears now, he threatened to bolt if his promoter didn't go after tougher challenges. He subsequently took on a murderers' row of opponents unequalled by anyone fighting today, unless you count the delusional antics of Evander Holyfield. Oscar didn't win all the tough fights, but he earned plenty of respect and piles and piles of phenomenal, record-breaking money.

But Oscar also fought exciting. Jermain, in one contest after another, registers at least nine points on the bore-o-meter. Changing that has to come from him, not his handlers, not trainer Emanuel Steward, who, between rounds of Taylor's fights has been afflicted by increasingly desperate Valium moments. Taylor needs to get tough fights and fight tough or get out of the way and let someone else try.

Magoo: Dick Flaherty's 117-111 score for Spinks over Taylor isn't even the worst job he's done lately. If you'll allow me to quote myself, I earlier called his 100-90 score for Sechew Powell over Kassim Ouma in Madison Square Garden "a dazzling display of ineptitude." Four weeks later in Los Angeles, he and Alejandro Rochin of Mexico and California scored 116-111 for Samuel Peter over James Toney in their first fight, which, I pointed out at the time, handed victory to the wrong fighter.

I keep writing about this Flaherty guy, and they keep rewarding him with bigger fights. Why not reward him with a ticket to Peru instead? I agree that's not far enough, but it's a start. In fact, I hereby put up the first $20 bucks to establish a ship-Flaherty-to-Peru fund. I figure if enough IRS agents saw all three fights, we have a shot at getting them to rule contributions as tax-deductible.

Will The Real Zab Please Sit Down?

The boxing world was distressed to discover that in a previously arranged telephonic media conference call with Zab Judah, father-trainer Yoel got on the phone and posed as his son for the entire question-and-answer session. This was before Judah's pay-per-view bout with Miguel Cotto in the Garden.

Yes, it was a nasty trick that indicated both Judahs' lack of sincerity or respect for the event. Though the ruse wasn't discovered in real time, it was quickly found out. I don't mean to brag, but had I joined the teleconference, I'd have caught Yoel within a few minutes. That's because there are two foolproof ways to distinguish between the two Judahs' voices, and I was familiar with both.

If you don't hear the guy asking, "Know what I'm saying?" every six or seven words, it definitely isn't Zab. Can you, like, imagine a conversation between Zab and a Valley girl? Any sane person forced to listen would, like, throw himself in front of a bus, like, after 20 minutes, tops. Know what I'm saying?

Second clue: If you can figure out what the guy's saying, it definitely isn't Yoel. For all I know, Yoel's been reciting the Brooklyn phone book into the microphone all these years because I never understood a word he said anyway. This guy has taken mumbling to new, unexplored levels, though for his acting debut, he stepped up his annunciation to set a false trail.

In some ways I sympathize with the Judahs' prank because what good are those teleconferences anyway? What do you expect a guy to say? *I've got two bruised ribs on my left side, and if this guy connects with any right hooks to the body I'm guaranteed to crumple like Kleenex.*

No, he's going to tell you he's feeling great, this is the best camp he's ever had, he's never been better prepared, and fight night his opponent is totally screwed. If the interviewee is somebody like Spinks, who plans to run like a deer, he will also proclaim he's going right after this guy and won't be satisfied if he doesn't score a knockout.

Boxing is as real as you can get, yet these media conference spectacles, because they're treated like everyday news, are the opposite of real. You've heard no news is good

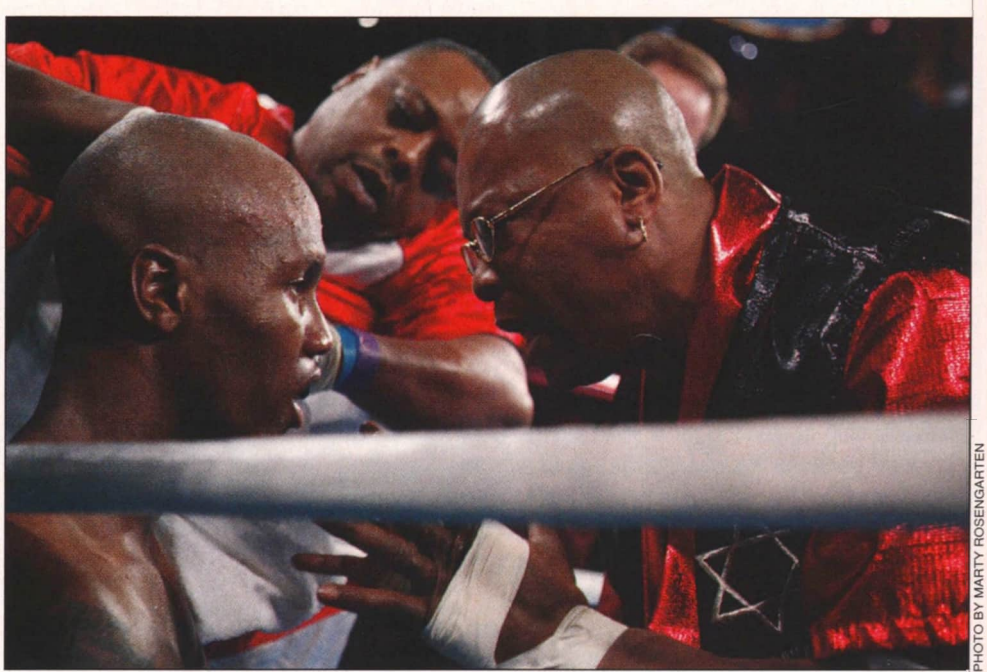


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Look who's talking!

news? In the news biz, good news is no news at all. When a talented, virtuous, hard-working fighter speaks eloquently and from the heart, newspapers and networks drown that event like a puppy. If he insults the virtue of De La Hoya's wife or, even better, if he bites Lennox Lewis on the leg, he'll make every news show on the planet.

The Bozo Factor: Yes, the more things change the more they stay the same. People have pretty much stopped asking me whether I think Mike Tyson will regain the championship. Now they want to know Evander Holyfield's chances. This wouldn't be so bad if maybe, just once, one of these bozos would also inquire about, say, Rafael Marquez or Israel Vazquez (thereby proving he's no bozo after all). But you can't heap all the blame on bozos. Those two athletes have a better chance of being struck by lightning than making the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, a magazine that is both a symptom and a cause of prevailing boxing ignorance.

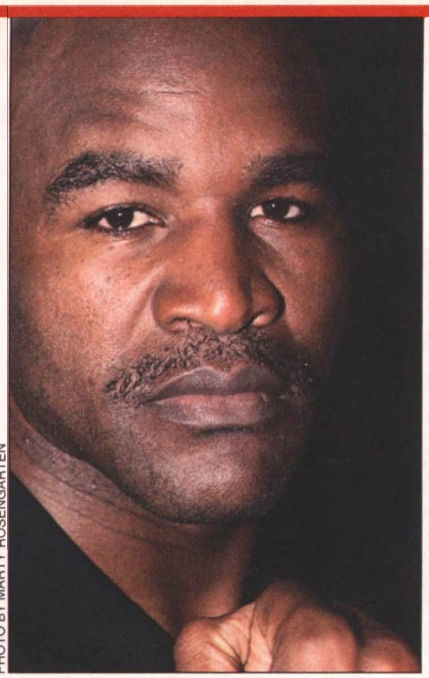


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Holyfield: Inquiring bozos want to know

Concussions Ignored: At least 10 years ago, fight manager Joe Sayatovich pointed out to me that football players were going back in the game moments after suffering brutal concussions. Compare that, he said, to boxing, where a kayoed fighter is prevented from competing again for 60 days. Now, thanks to HBO's *Real Sports* and other media, the NFL has been forced to at least look at the long-term health results. But try holding those teams up to the boxing standard, and you'd hear them screaming all the way to the neurology clinic.

And Another Thing: A fighter who lands one or two shots, then waltzes off like Matilda for 12 rounds, fight after fight, can't possibly be considered best pound-for-pound. On that subject, the editors of this magazine and I agree to disagree. I enjoy watching Floyd Mayweather work, but his attitude inside the ring disqualifies him from his lofty position on our list. You don't have to knock your opponent on his butt. But if you want to be the best, you have to at least try. Boxing isn't gin rummy. It isn't just about points. ■

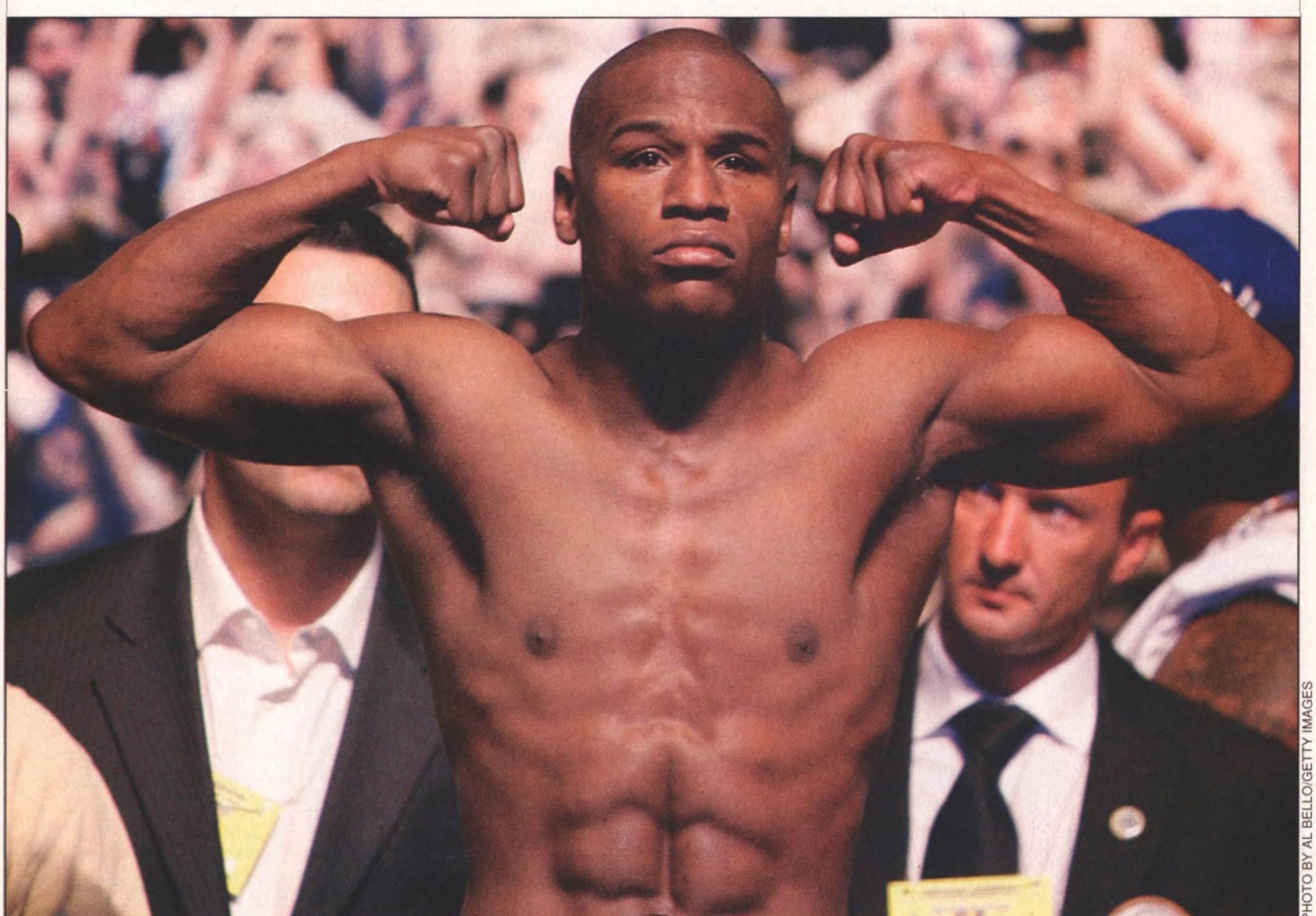


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Goldman wants "Pretty Boy" demoted

[Camera Clicks]

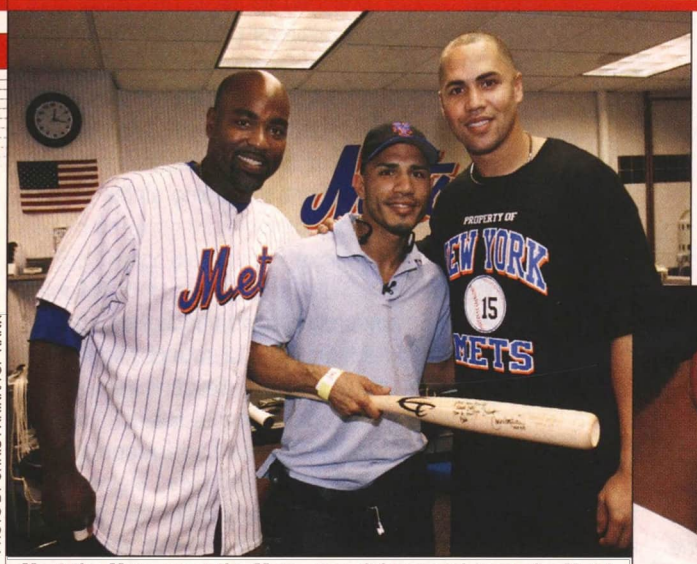


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Meet the Mets, meet the Mets, step right up and greet the Mets! Miguel Cotto gets slightly more privileged access than the average person, hanging out with fellow sluggers Carlos Delgado and Carlos Beltran during a trip to Shea Stadium a few days before his fight with Zab Judah. And no, Zab, although it may have felt like it at times, Cotto was not wielding that wooden bat in the ring at Madison Square Garden.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

When in Queens, Cotto hangs out with the Mets; when in the Bronx, he hangs out with the Bronx Bawlers. Adoring fans surrounded Cotto and his tots as he made his way down the street, heading to George Steinbrenner's office with the kids to see if it's too early for "The Boss" to overpay for their services.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

The International Boxing Hall of Fame opened its doors to some of the greats of the game in June ... and to Jose Sulaiman too. The living inductees in the class of 2007 included (left to right) Ricardo Lopez, Pernell Whitaker, Sulaiman, Roberto Duran, and Amilcar Brusa, all of whom made their way to Canastota, New York, to receive their Hall of Fame rings, see their plaques go up on the walls, and simply enjoy the festivities that make Induction Weekend one of the highlights of any true boxing fan's year.

PHOTO BY THOMAS LOHNES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

We'd heard that Arthur Abraham's jaw was all healed from his brutal fight with Edison Miranda, but, um, it doesn't look quite right to us, stuck wide open and whatnot. Well, at least he got a nifty-looking crown with his Burger King meal.

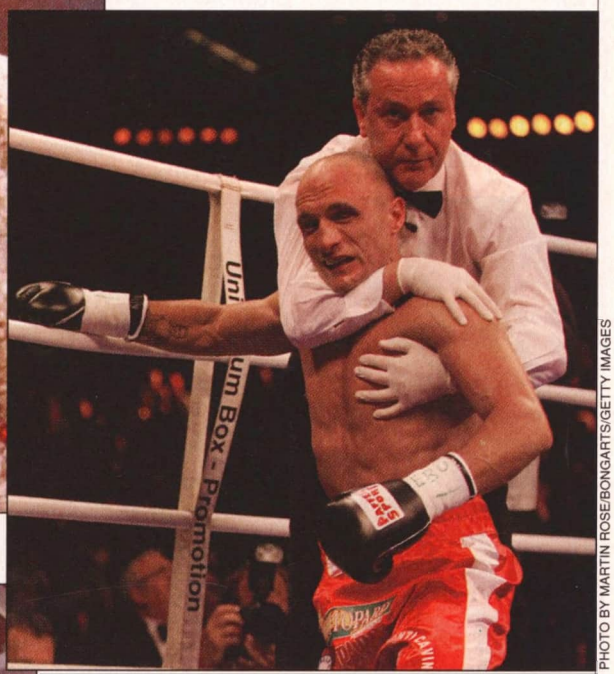


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

In Germany, the rules are a little different, and referees are allowed to apply the sleeperhold to fighters anytime they drop to a knee. The referee seen here impersonating Brutus Beefcake is Jesus Morata Garcia, while his victim is Leonardo Turchi, who had in actuality just lost by first-round knockout to Thomas Ulrich during Universum Champions Night at the Color Line Arena in Hamburg.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

If Manny Pacquiao still has political aspirations, he must heed this warning: Keep your hands on the plaque, and off of Alexa from Roundcardgirlz.com. With a little help from his lovely friend, Pacquiao received the Fighter of the Year Award from the Boxing Writers Association of America in June, an honor well-deserved indeed.

By Don Stewart

Henry Crawford Welterweight

Henry Crawford doesn't get many chances to sit down and watch a movie. Really, he doesn't get many chances to sit down at all.

But now and then, Crawford will scrape out enough time from his fight-week schedule to pop *Cinderella Man* into the DVD player. It's about a white heavyweight during the Great Depression, but Crawford can relate to the story to the point where he almost feels it's his own.

"Very much, very much," said Crawford, a 5'10" welterweight prospect. "Getting the lights cut off and all of that. Trying to feed the kids. It's a good motivation movie."

In many ways, Crawford's a modern-day Jimmy Braddock. Like "The Cinderella Man," Crawford is a blue-collar New Jersey native laboring to pay the bills while holding on to his boxing dreams. At the height of the Depression, Braddock walked several miles each day looking for work on the docks; in post-industrial America, Crawford puts in full-time hours on the graveyard shift at a supermarket.

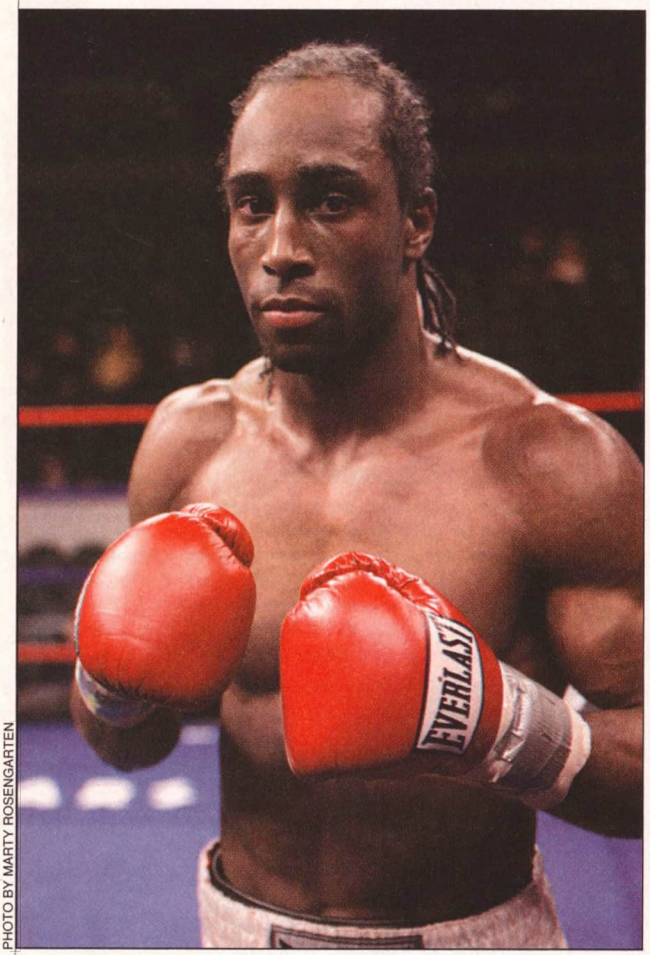


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Pro Record

2004		
Sept. 24	Luis Sanchez, Trenton, NJ	W 4
Oct. 8	Raymond Reyes, Philadelphia, PA	KO 4
Dec. 12	Eric Washington, Washington, D.C	W 4
2005		
Jan. 29	Philip McCants, Atlantic City, NJ	W 4
March 4	Alex Viramontes, Temecula, CA	W 4
April 8	Jimmy Desir, Miami, FL	W 4
June 25	Fernando Jimenez, Atlantic City	KO 1
Aug. 20	Gilbert Venegas, Rosemont, IL	D 6
Nov. 30	Tony Grygelko, North Bergen, NJ	KO 1
2006		
Jan. 28	Luis Santos, Atlantic City	Tech Win 6
May 11	Roberto Nava, North Bergen	KO 4
July 22	Roberto Valenzuela, Atlantic City	W 6
Sept. 16	Adam Wyant, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
Nov. 10	Christopher Henry, Whippany, NJ	W 6
2007		
Feb. 16	Carlos Aballe, Franklin Square, NY	KO 5
April 25	Jeremy Yelton, St. Paul, MN	KO 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
16	15	0	1	7

Crawford spends all night stocking shelves and unloading trucks. Afer work, he does his roadwork, maybe some weightlifting, grabs some Zs, and then goes to the gym to tune up with longtime trainer/adviser Nettles Nasser and assistant Mark Breland. "His rest times are very, very minimal," Nasser said. "I wonder sometimes how he breathes."

Crawford said he gets about three hours of sleep per day during the workweek, though he tries to make up for it on weekends. "It takes a toll on my body," the soft-spoken 26-year-old said. "It's real tough, especially coming home to my girl [fiancée Carolyn Davis], my kids, just the sacrificing. Sometimes, she just puts herself to the side because she knows what I'm going through."

Up-and-coming fighters working part-time jobs are no rarity. But even with the financial burden of five kids, it's odd for a prospect already signed by a major promoter to be working full-time hours and sleeping during the day.

Crawford is promoted by Main Events, but his contract doesn't include a regular stipend. He has yet to see more than $5,000 for a fight. And mostly due to his perceived lack of pop, Andre Berto, Julio Caesar Chavez Jr., and others often overshadow him when the division's top prospects are discussed.

He probably could make things easier on himself in the short term, financially at least, by getting out of boxing and picking up some overtime at the grocery store, where he's worked for almost 10 years. But Crawford still believes the sport can get him and his family to a better life, much as it did for Braddock back in the 1930s.

In 1999, Crawford was a rising amateur with blazing hand speed. He won the state Golden Gloves title at 132 pounds in 1999 and reached the 132-pound final the following year. But Crawford received a seven-year prison sentence in 2002 for conspiracy to commit armed robbery, the result of his minor role in a 2001 incident in nearby Passaic, New Jersey.

"He's a very nice kid," said *Herald News* boxing writer Keith Idec, who has covered Crawford for nearly a decade.

(Continued on Page 90)

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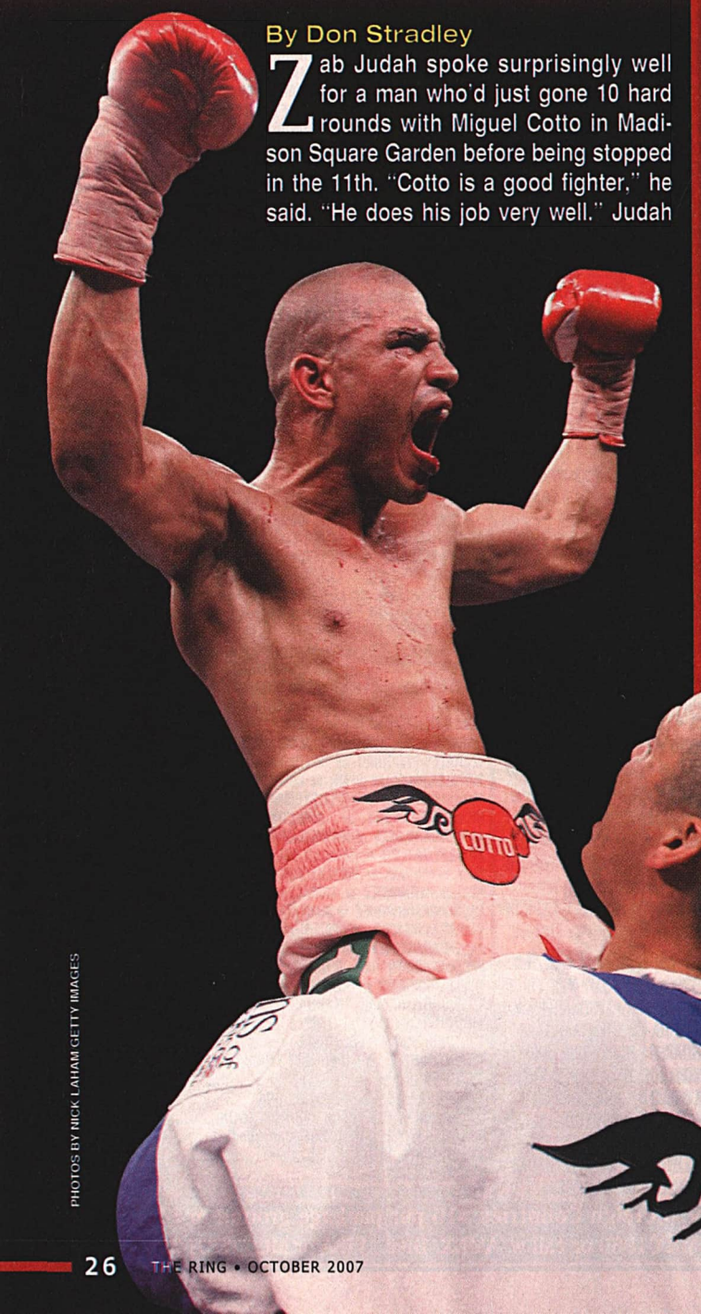
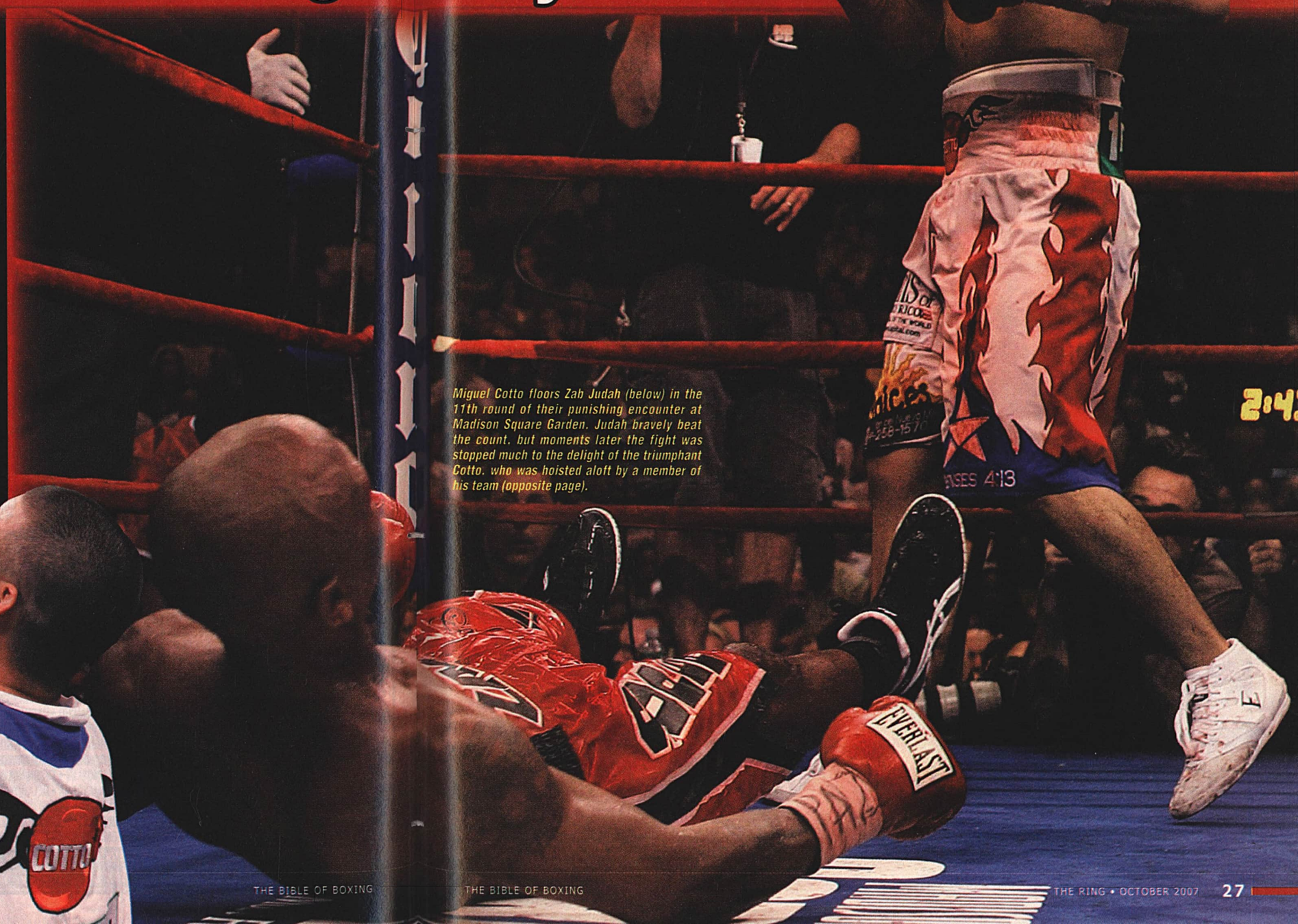
COTTO ON THE VERGE OF GREATNESS

But Is It Too Soon To Fight Floyd?

By Don Stradley

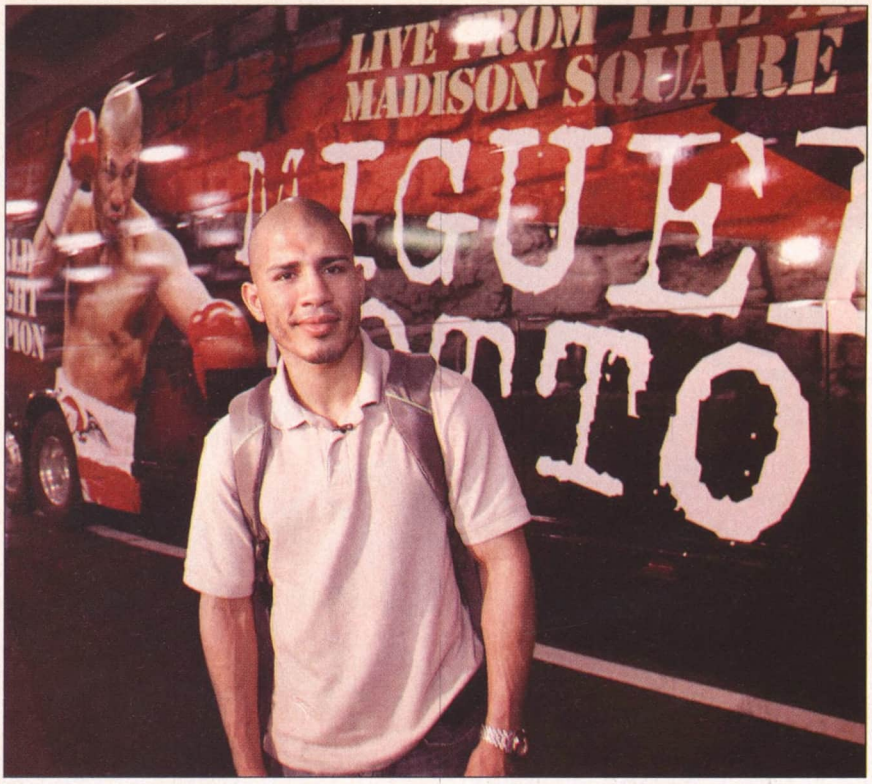
Zab Judah spoke surprisingly well for a man who'd just gone 10 hard rounds with Miguel Cotto in Madison Square Garden before being stopped in the 11th. "Cotto is a good fighter," he said. "He does his job very well." Judah





Miguel Cotto floors Zab Judah (below) in the 11th round of their punishing encounter at Madison Square Garden. Judah bravely beat the count, but moments later the fight was stopped much to the delight of the triumphant Cotto, who was hoisted aloft by a member of his team (opposite page).

PHOTOS BY NICK LAHAM GETTY IMAGES

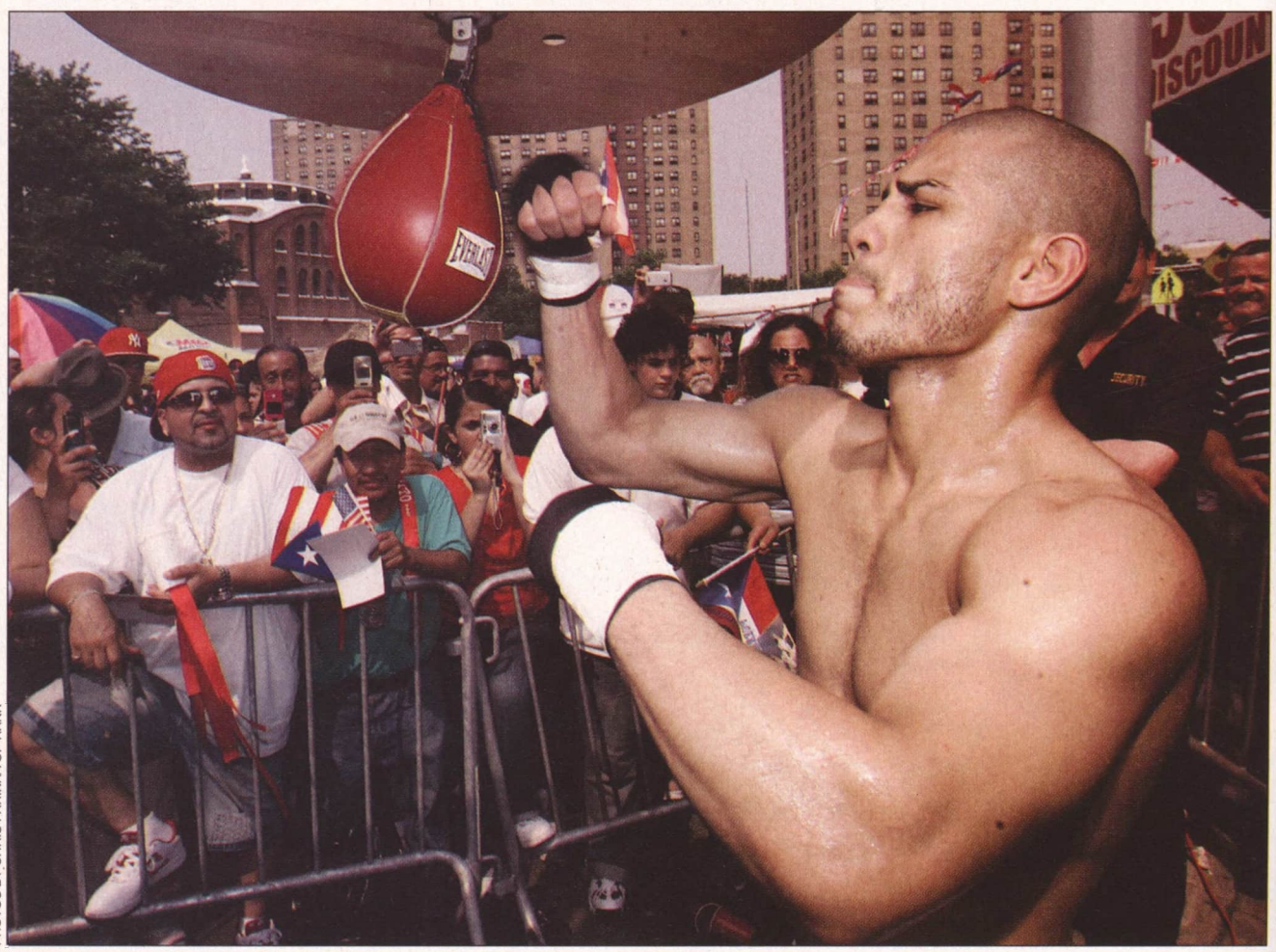


Thanks to a large Puerto Rican population, Cotto has become a major star in New York City, complete with a bus hyping his fight with Judah (above) and a public workout that attracted a large crowd (below). His fight with Judah was the first boxing sellout at the Garden since Hopkins-Trinidad in 2001.

was wearing oversized dark glasses to hide his demolished right eye. From underneath the glasses, an unexpected trickle of blood rolled down his cheek, drawing a gasp from the postfight press gathering. Judah wiped the trickle away with a napkin and assured everyone he was okay. He even said he was ready for Cotto-Judah II.

Why he would want more of Cotto is a mystery, since the Puerto Rican star mauled him, fouled him, and made him bleed. At times, Cotto was so intent on pounding Judah that referee Arthur Mercante Jr. had to pull Cotto off of Judah at the bell, as if Cotto were a pit bull that had found a tasty victim to chew on. "I don't ever cut like this," Judah said, wiping his cheek. "My skin isn't sensitive to cuts."

The fight, which attracted a capacity crowd of 20,684 and $2.5-million at the gate, was the biggest New York fight since Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad in 2001. In fact, it sold more tickets than Trinidad's last New York appearance,



PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

against Ricardo Mayorga, partly because the prices were more reasonable. It's taken Cotto, 30-0 (25), hardly any time at all to step in as Puerto Rico's favorite fighter since Trinidad's retirement. This was his third consecutive fight in New York that was held on the eve of New York's annual Puerto Rican Day parade, which may as well be called "The Miguel Cotto Victory Parade," since he's always part of it.

"Puerto Rican people are happy to see any Puerto Rican do well, especially outside of the country," said Hollywood star and RING subscriber Freddie Prinze Jr., who was ringside for Cotto-Judah. "Cotto feels the responsibility and he performs honorably.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Judah was twice floored by low blows in the early going, once in the first round and again in the third. The second foul cost Cotto a one-point penalty. Even so, Judah was not pleased with way referee Arthur Mercante Jr. handled the fight.

PROPS FOR JUDAH

Even though Zab Judah fought valiantly against Miguel Cotto, we have to wonder what becomes of him now. The former welterweight champion hasn't won a fight in two years. Still, Bob Arum praised him after the bout. "Zab Judah showed he's a man. His reputation right now is sky-high. His career, in earnest, is just beginning." But when Judah's father-trainer, Joel, asked Arum for a rematch, Arum said that Judah would have to beat a significant opponent before that would be considered.

At 29, Judah may be settling into the role of gatekeeper, a surprise development considering he was once considered a potential superstar. There may be some fights for him—a lot of contenders would probably like to try to get Judah's name on their ledger—and Judah will always carry some clout at the box office.

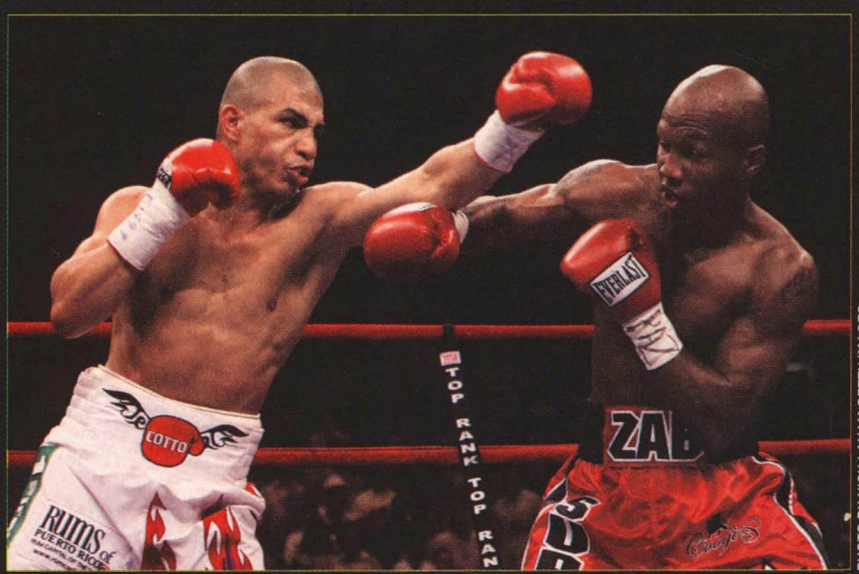


PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Judah gamely traded with Cotto throughout

"The Garden was sold out partly because of me," Judah said. "I have a lot of fans. When I fought Cory Spinks in St. Louis, 23,000 people were there. Spinks never sold out a place like that. My fight with Mayweather was a big pay-per-view. When Zab Judah comes, people watch. I know my numbers.

"I have bad luck in Las Vegas; I have bad luck in New York. I may have to go to Memphis and fight down there."

Judah had nothing bad to say about Cotto, but he wasn't happy with referee Arthur Mercante Jr.

"Look at the back of my head," Judah said. "I have knots on top of knots. That's not legal. I wish the referee had done a better job. I got tired of his tedious calls. He was always saying my name. But people are always looking for Zab to mess up so they can hang me. Crazy things happen when Zab Judah fights, so this time I behaved myself."

Judah was particularly aware of the large police presence in the Garden and had had gone out of his way to play down the ethnic angle of the promotion. A New York radio show tried to stir up the black-Latino rivalry, but Judah dismissed the idea. "I didn't want a race war," he said. "I have a lot of Latino fans and a lot of Latino friends. Besides, with 20,000 people here, there wouldn't be enough police to control them.

"We came to New York City and brought boxing back. And that's beautiful."

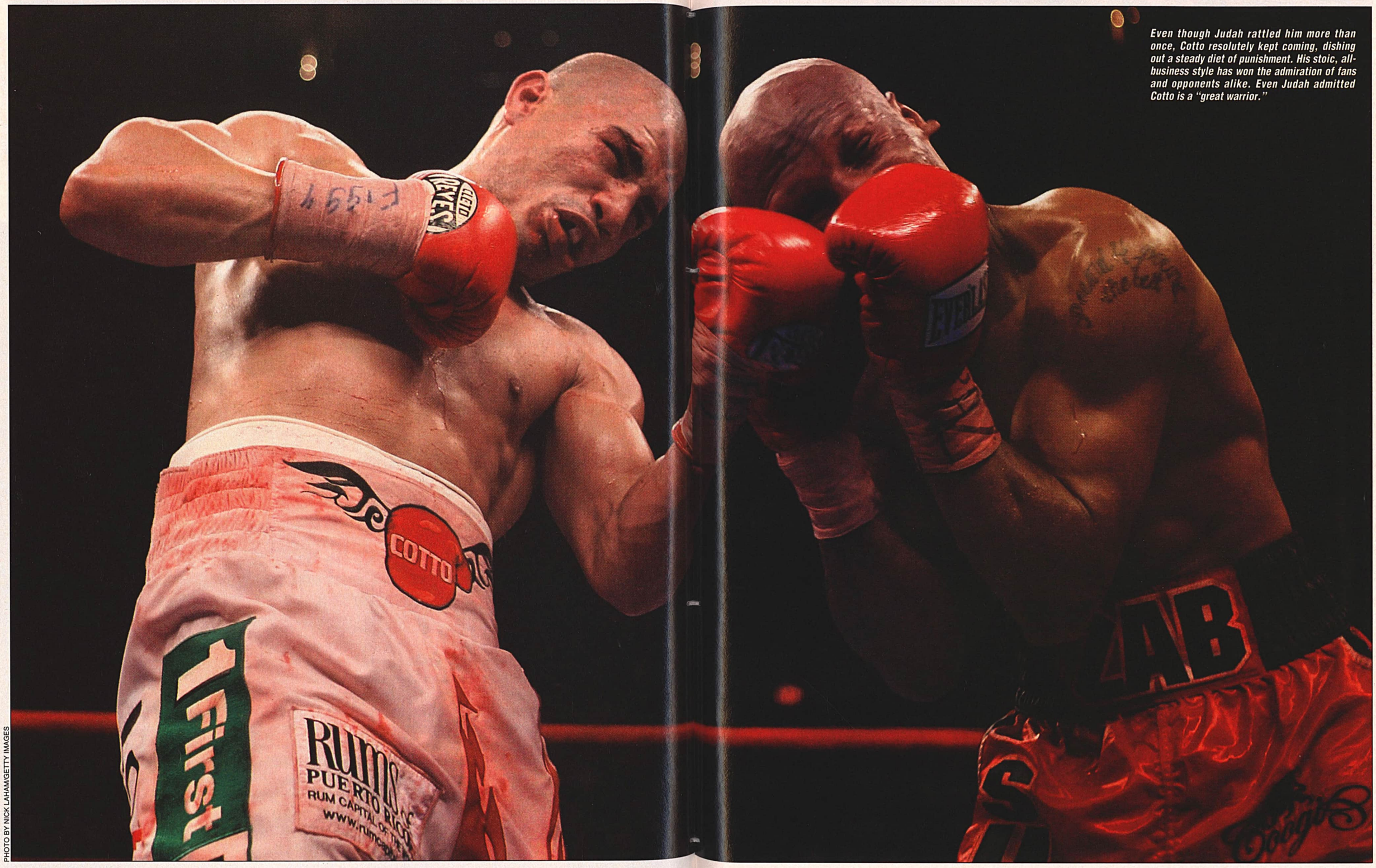
—D.S.

Trinidad was great, but he enjoyed the glamour; Cotto is all business. He is so serious and focused. He will eventually have the same status as Trinidad. This fight gets him a little closer."

Top Rank has built Cotto gradually, and the payoff is that he is one of the few active fighters who can fill the Garden. Arum only recalled two other Top Rank events to turn the trick—Ali-Frazier II in 1974, and Duran-Moore in 1983—so Cotto is in excellent company. But the Monday after the fight was telling: New York's Spanish-language newspapers featured Cotto on their front pages; New York's other tabloids, the *Daily News* and *The Post*, featured the bulbous head of Tony Soprano. This was too bad because Cotto's performance on June 9 was far more satisfying than the HBO series finale.

So what exactly does Cotto mean to boxing right now? Is he really on the verge of being a superstar or is he merely a New York act that ties in neatly with the Puerto Rican audience?

"Everybody that walked away from this event is saying one thing: A star has just arrived," said Top Rank President Todd duBoef.



Even though Judah rattled him more than once, Cotto resolutely kept coming, dishing out a steady diet of punishment. His stoic, all-business style has won the admiration of fans and opponents alike. Even Judah admitted Cotto is a "great warrior."

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

The blood trickling down Cotto's chin proves that his victory didn't come easy. The faces of both combatants were a mess at the conclusion of their crowd-pleasing battle.

"He's not as big as he's going to be in about two years," said Arum. "He's a nice young man with a pleasing style. People like to see a fighter hunt down his prey. We need fighters who fight, not businessmen who bulls___ their way to big money."

"He's a great warrior," said Judah. "But is he a superstar? No. There's a difference between being a great fighter and a superstar."

Who would guess that Zab Judah would be the voice of reason? Evidently, the beating he caught from Cotto didn't rattle him too much.

Judah, 34-5 (25), ignored the ear-splitting screams that greeted Cotto's introduction, and came out for the first round anxious to test his opponent's chin. He landed a couple of stiff lefts, and then fell to the canvas grimacing after one of Cotto's bodyshots strayed a tad low. After dominating the second, Cotto, 146½, landed a blatant low blow during the third that crumpled Judah in his own corner. For a moment it seemed that the fight would turn into a typical Judah fight, but as Judah, 145, explained later, "The referee told me not to retaliate. When I hit a guy low, I get fined and suspended. Cotto fouled me twice and nothing happened. But those fouls affected me all night."

Cotto was, however, penalized one point in the third, and from there onward the fight settled into a rhythm of Cotto pounding Judah, while Judah chipped away with uppercuts and the occasional potshot. During the sixth, after Judah was warned for headbutting, Cotto grabbed him and rubbed his head as if there were no hard feelings, but moments later Cotto was beating him to the body and head with blows that could be heard even above the roar of the crowd.

By the seventh, both fighters were showing signs of the struggle: Judah was cut over the eye, and Cotto's lower lip was hanging open, spilling trails of red down his torso. Both fighters wiped away the gore as if it were a small inconvenience and continued throwing punches. Judah looked to be tiring, but he hung on because something special was happening. The dumb moments of his career, the temper tantrums, the cockiness, were suddenly forgotten, and he was standing his ground and snarling, challenging Cotto.

In the eighth, Cotto turned southpaw and hammered Judah on the jaw with three consecutive lefts, blows that seemed like the beginning of the end, but Judah somehow landed a left of his own that made Cotto shudder. The ninth saw Judah take a knee, his eyes so filled with blood that he couldn't see, but even then he ended the round with a shocking left that riled Cotto. That punch, which Cotto later said, "made my legs dance a little," was Judah's last hurrah.

Early in the 11th, Cotto knocked Judah flat with a three-punch combination, punctuated by a left to the forehead. Judah rose, wobbled, and fell into the ropes as Cotto pounced on him. Mercante Jr. stopped the bout at the 0:49 mark.

"It was maybe the fight of the year," Cotto said after the bout. His right eyebrow was split and his lower lip looked like a tomato that had been left in the sun. "It was the toughest fight of my career. I knew Zab was a great puncher, but thanks to God I can take his punch."

Cotto didn't say much more before Arum cut the press conference short. The promoter didn't want to leave Cotto out there on his own for too long, as if he's trying to keep it secret that, outside of the ring, Cotto is about as engaging as a concrete block. But we don't care. He's already given us a half-dozen entertaining fights, and if Antonio Margarito gets by Paul Williams this summer, there's talk that Cotto-Margarito is a done deal. That should be the fight of the year, if Cotto-Judah isn't. But it was Floyd Mayweather's name that inevitably came up during the post fight gibber-jabber. There'd even been a young Puerto Rican boy running up and down the aisles with a homemade sign that read "Cotto vs. Floyd." The kid's sign spoke for most of us, but Arum squashed any talk of a possible Cotto-Mayweather bout.

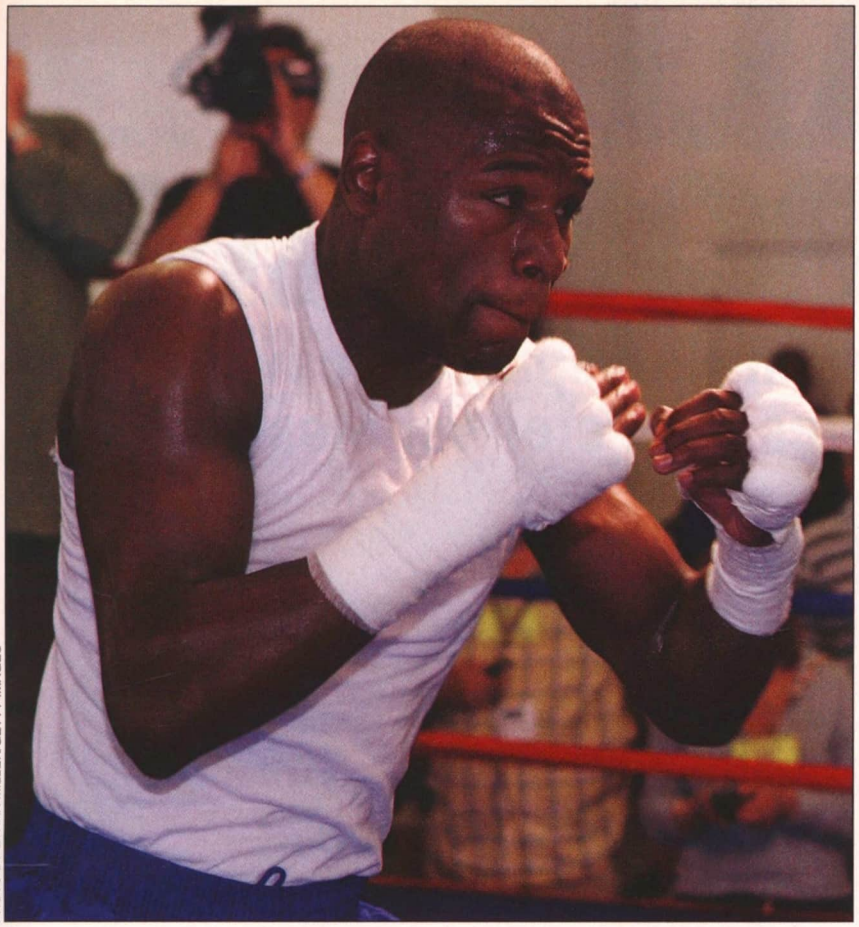


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Most fans are eager for a match between Cotto and world welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather. But promoter Bob Arum doesn't think it will happen in the near future.

"Floyd just made $20-million," Arum said. "He won't be fighting until he spends all of that $20-million."

Mayweather told *The New York Times*, through his advisor, Leonard Ellerbe, that Cotto is not in his league. "Not even the same stratosphere," said Ellerbe.

Maybe now that Mayweather has dined at Oscar De La Hoya's table, he won't break bread with anyone else. That makes perfect sense from a business standpoint, not to mention a physical standpoint. Why should Mayweather fight a bruiser like Cotto when he could play patty cake with De La Hoya again for another $20-million? Unlike De La Hoya, Cotto won't forget to throw his left. Cotto is a legit pressure fighter and bodypuncher, not like De La Hoya, who doesn't seem to know what he is style-wise. Cotto, superstar or not, is the sort of fighter who could give Mayweather a real fight.

As Judah showed in June and as Paulie Malignaggi showed last year, Cotto has a way of taking you out of your comfort zone. He chases you down and forces you to throw punches. He takes a few licks, and then slams you back five or six times. You may think you have him figured out, but he keeps coming, even as blood trickles down his face. He can't be discouraged. Ricardo Torres knocked him down twice, and Cotto kept coming. Malignaggi and Judah are both fast fighters, known for using their legs; against Cotto they both spent a lot of time on the ropes getting pounded. Mayweather is obviously better than Malignaggi and Judah, but Cotto is clearly a fiercer challenge for Mayweather than De La Hoya is at this stage in Oscar's career.

While Cotto wears the WBA belt, he won't be the real welterweight champ until he beats Mayweather. But if Cotto isn't a superstar yet, there are a few things that might help him get to the next level and make him more attractive for Floyd.

1) He doesn't seem unbeatable. That may sound like an odd thing to have in his favor, but because Cotto seems vulnerable, fighters like Shane Mosley or Ricky Hatton might be tempted to take him on. Beating those two would put Cotto into the superstar category. By then Mayweather will be tired of hearing people say he's avoiding Cotto, and he might actually agree to fight him.

2) Top Rank is good at making stars. Cotto won't reach the De La Hoya level of stardom—he's simply not cut from the same cloth—but his fights are usually exciting and he has a huge ethnic following. It's the same foundation that worked for Manny Pacquiao and Julio Cesar Chavez, to name two. And, like Pacquiao, he's working on his English.

3) He's flipping huge in New York. That counts for a lot, and if Top Rank can lure Mosley there, the Garden folks will have to add seats on the roof to accommodate the extra customers. The New York papers were buzzing during the days prior to the fight, saying that the Big Apple was once again a boxing hotbed. Arum agreed that more big fights should come to New York, and Cotto would lead the charge.

Even 93-year-old Budd Schulberg was in New York for the big weekend of boxing, which included the Boxing Writers Association of America's annual dinner. Schulberg was excited about the activity at the Garden, but when asked to comment on the current state of the game, his eyes twinkled as if recalling an old lover. "It's not like it used to be," he said, as if we should have known better than to ask.

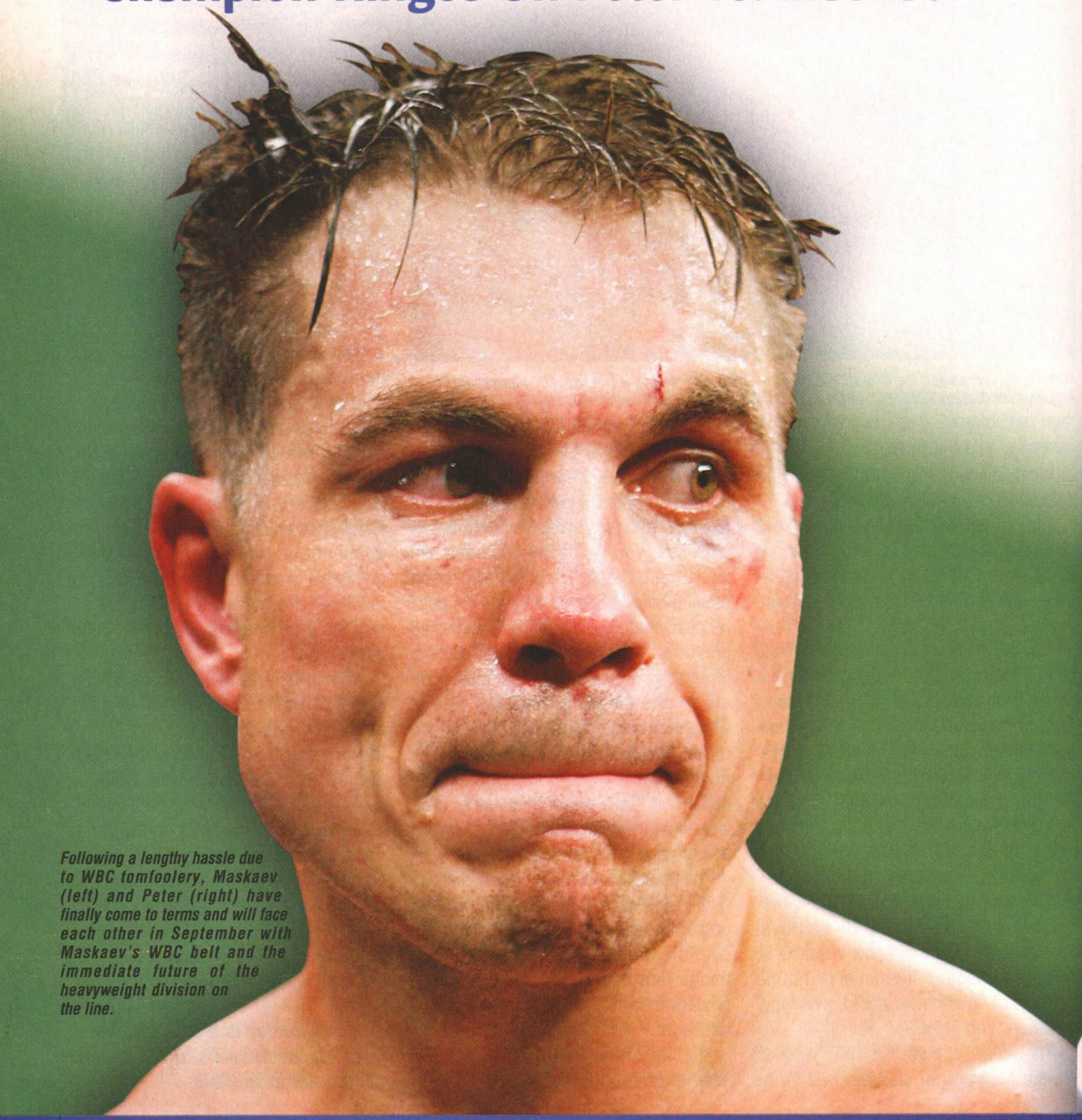
With all due respect to Schulberg, the author of *The Harder They Fall* might be missing something if he remains stuck in the dreamy past. But we'll bet Budd appreciated Cotto-Judah and all that came with it.

Even if Cotto is, as Mayweather's camp insists, nothing more than a niche fighter with a following that doesn't go beyond New York and Puerto Rico, it's quite a niche to have. After all, every time Cotto fights in New York, they throw a parade for him. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

VITALI IMPORTANT

The Search For An Undisputed Heavyweight Champion Hinges On Peter vs. Maskaev



Following a lengthy hassle due to WBC tomfoolery, Maskaev (left) and Peter (right) have finally come to terms and will face each other in September with Maskaev's WBC belt and the immediate future of the heavyweight division on the line.

By Eric Raskin

Neither Samuel Peter nor Oleg Maskaev will ever be able to get away with claiming to float like a butterfly. But their upcoming heavyweight battle may nonetheless have a butterfly effect on the sport of boxing.

Here's the potential impact of Peter-Maskaev in reverse: For boxing to prosper, it would help to restore public interest in the heavyweight division; to restore public interest in the heavyweight division, it would help to have one fighter the world acknowledges as the champion; to crown an inarguable champion, the top two fighters in the division must square off; and to have any hope of the top two fighters in the division squaring off, they must not be named Wladimir Klitschko and Vitali Klitschko.

Alphabet body rulings are always subject to change, but as of now, the winner of Maskaev vs. Peter is required by the WBC to face big brother Vitali in his next defense. Currently, Peter is rated number two by THE RING, Maskaev number three, with Wladimir Klitschko in the top spot. With Peter and Maskaev fighting to solidify that second spot, all that remains is for the winner to fight Wladimir to crown a recognized king. But Vitali stands in the way, a 6'8", 250-pound traffic cop holding up a yield sign.

Hence the enormous butterfly effect potential of Peter vs. Maskaev. Following the series of if-this-then-thats, if Maskaev, the fighter whom we know Vitali wants to fight, wins, the negative ramifications for the sport of boxing could be enormous. And if Peter, the fighter whom we're not sure Vitali wants to fight, wins, there could be sport-altering positive ramifications.

Maybe Peter-Maskaev isn't the biggest fight that can be made in the heavyweight division. But all of the bigger fights hinge upon its outcome.

A quick recap of how Vitali Klitschko and the WBC combined to delay Maskaev-Peter and the division's progress by about four or five months: Klitschko, who last fought in 2004 and retired in '05 after a series of injuries as debilitating emotionally as they were physically, announced in January '07 that he was returning to boxing for a shot at WBC beltholder Maskaev. This did not go over big with Peter, who had already won not one, but two, WBC eliminators against

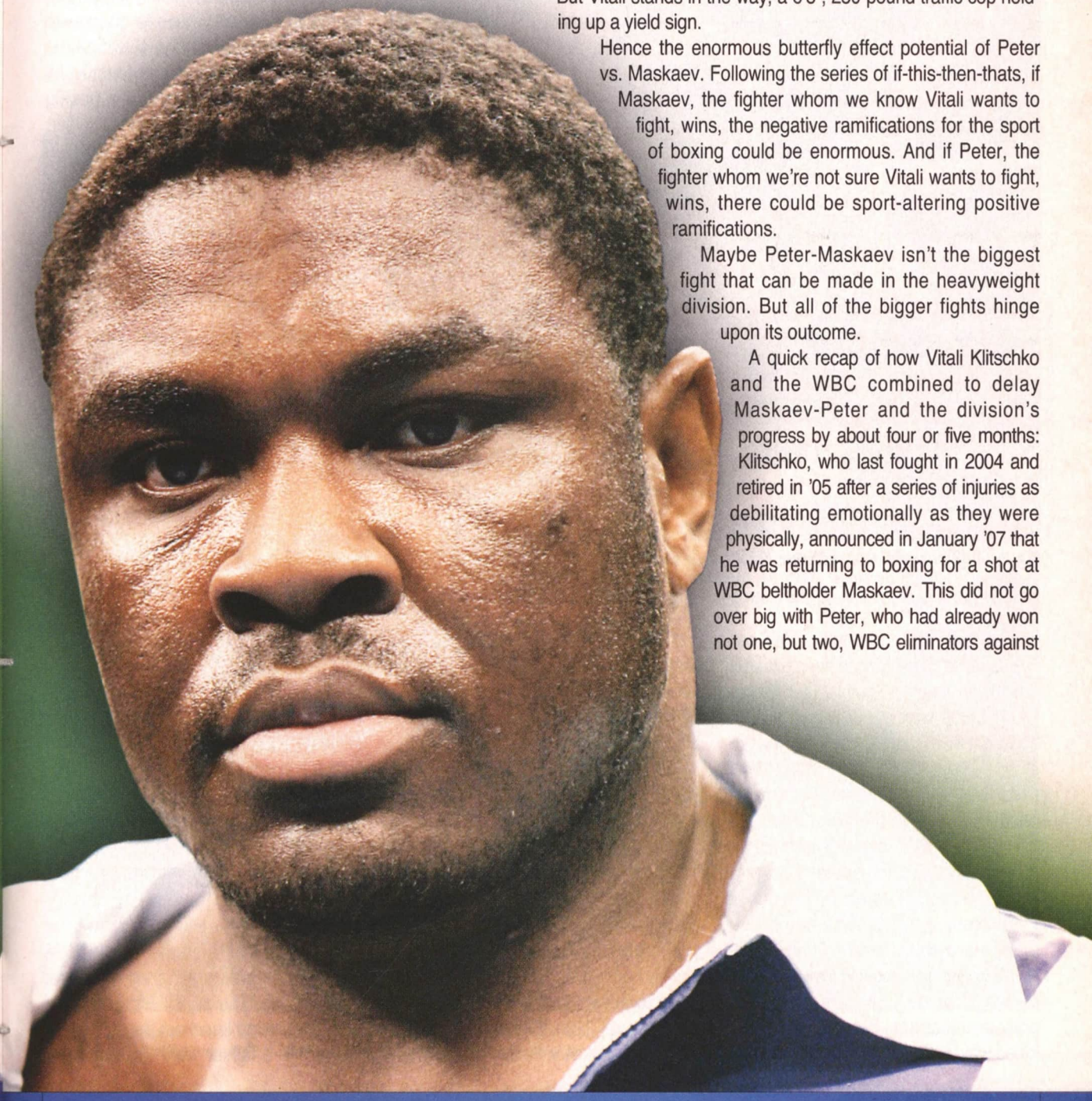


PHOTO BY ROBERT LABERGE/GETTY IMAGES

The fly in the ointment: Vitali Klitschko hasn't fought since he bludgeoned Danny Williams for an eighth-round kayo in December 2004. But thanks to a ridiculous WBC rule, the winner of Peter-Maskaev will have to give him the next crack at the organization's title.

James Toney to earn a shot at Maskaev. But because Klitschko had been awarded "champion emeritus" status after retiring, which came with the provision that he could get an automatic title shot whenever he wanted, controversy ensued. While Peter was patiently waiting for the toll-booth man to give the driver in front of him change, Vitali was attempting to zip past him in the E-Z Pass lane.

So the lawyers were called in, and as Peter promoter Dino Duva put it, "The WBC realized that Samuel had rights." Klitschko's claim of being first in line fell by the wayside, but he still seemed poised to leapfrog Peter the old-fashioned way: with a payoff.

"The WBC realized that they had promised the fight to Samuel," Duva said, "but they also saw the potential money and glitz of doing the Klitschko-Maskaev fight first, so it was always under the context of, 'Please try to see if you can work out a step-aside deal, and Sam will get the winner.'"

Peter's price to surrender the mandatory shot that he really wanted was high, however, and it ended up taking upward of $2.5-million to get him to step aside—a number that, after all parties had decided on it, was determined to be too steep to make Maskaev-Klitschko financially viable. Had Klitschko never unretired, Maskaev-Peter would have probably happened by April or May, but instead April and May were spent hammering out the details after Maskaev-Klitschko fell apart, and as of press time in early-June, the fight appeared headed for a September date on Showtime.

"Basically it was nothing but a big waste of time, aggravation, and legal fees," Duva said. "Now at least we're here, we got what we wanted, and the bottom line is now we're just looking forward to Samuel getting the title fight against Oleg and hopefully winning it."

Ah, yes, that little matter of winning the fight. And if you ask the majority of the fans and experts, it really is just a little matter. You may have to go back to Mike Tyson-Frank Bruno II to find the last time a challenger was favored by this high a percentage of the boxing cognoscenti over a defending titleholder.

Why is Peter an almost unanimous choice to win? Two reasons: First, a huge puncher, which is something Peter unquestionably is, usually gets a little bit of extra credit in the observer's mind; and second, Maskaev was written off so completely after his three knockout losses from 2000-02 that it's hard for people to accept the idea that he might just be recovered, improved, and a championship-caliber heavyweight again.

"Let me tell you something," said Maskaev co-manager Dennis Rappaport. "The most underestimated fighter in boxing today is Oleg Maskaev.

"Here was a guy who was walking down the boulevard of broken dreams and blighted hopes, looking at life through the toilet floor," Rappaport continued dramatically. "His trainer told him to quit. His promoter released him for nothing. And we came in, and made him the right fights, had him learn for the first time. He was the most mismanaged fighter in the history of the sport. But he is not the man he *was*. He is now the man he should have always been."

A close inspection of the Kazakh-born, Russia-bred, America-based fighter's resume suggests Rappaport, despite his obvious biases, may be on to something. Maskaev turned pro in 1993 against a fighter with a 21-0 record. Even though "The Big O" scored a stunning third-round knockout, he still wasn't viewed as a fighter worth moving care-

fully. In his fifth fight, he faced Joe Thomas, a 275-pound heavyweight with a 23-1-1 record, and after he won that, he was rewarded with a match against wicked-hitting former heavyweight titlist Oliver McCall in a scheduled 10-rounder in his seventh fight. Maskaev got drilled in the first round.

He came back and won four straight—two against unbeaten opponents—before being paired with then-unbeaten David Tua, who iced Maskaev in the 11th round of a deadlocked fight.

Maskaev's exploits since represent extreme highs and lows: a star-making through-the-ropes kayo of Hasim Rahman in '99; a startling knockout loss to Kirk Johnson a year later; dreadful kayo defeats at the hands of the ordinary Lance Whitaker and Corey Sanders; a slow rebuilding that saw him win 10 straight fights against modest opposition to secure a rematch with Rahman for the WBC belt; and, as a heavy underdog, another knockout of Rahman, this time in the 12th round. Some viewed it as a sign that Maskaev was a danger to any heavyweight out there. Most instead condemned Rahman for losing to a chinless bum who was washed up four years earlier.

Having made one successful but meaningless defense of the belt against the limited Peter Okhello, Maskaev, 34-5 (26), remains possibly the least respected of the heavyweight beltholders—hence Vitali Klitschko's blatant cherry-picking of him as an opponent against whom he could come back and reclaim the green belt. Would a rusty, injury-prone Klitschko have as easy a time with Maskaev as he appears to think? If Sam Peter does what most experts expect him to do, we'll never find out.

Peter's career trajectory much more closely resembles that of the classic boxing prospect groomed for championships and stardom. The first 4½ years and 24 fights were filled with matches against unknowns, trialhorses, and, toward the end, top-30ish names like Charles Shufford, Jeremy Williams, and Yanqui Diaz, with 21 of the 24 fights ending early thanks to "The Nigerian Nightmare's" awesome strength and heavy hands. In September '05, Team Peter decided it was time for a dangerous test, taking on the younger Klitschko brother, Wladimir, he of the very high ceiling and terribly low basement. Peter scored three knock-

PHOTO BY MARC SEROTA/GETTY IMAGES

Peter jabs at James Toney en route to a unanimous decision in the second of two so-called WBC eliminators to earn a crack at Maskaev. Unfortunately, the Nigerian and his team had to fight almost as hard outside of the ring to secure the title fight they had been promised.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Even though he'd knocked out Rahman in 1999, Maskaev wasn't given much of a chance of doing it again when they fought a rematch in 2006. But "The Big O" proved the critics wrong and stopped Rahman again to claim the WBC strap.

downs and seemed poised at times to take advantage of Klitschko's vulnerabilities, but was outboxed in every round in which he didn't send Wlad to the canvas—not to mention badly hurt for the first time in his career, by a left hook in the final round—and lost a unanimous 12-round decision.

Peter was brought right back less than three months later with a win against journeyman Robert Hawkins, then came a blowout against hapless Julius Long, and in September '06, Peter faced Toney in a WBC eliminator. He won a split decision in one of those difficult-to-judge, it-depends-what-you-like type affairs, and the alphabet boys told him if he wanted his shot at Maskaev, he'd have to beat Toney a second time. So he did precisely that, outboxing the aging master boxer to win an easy decision and move his record to 28-1 (22).

"Peter has shown improvement," observed analyst Al Bernstein, who called both Toney fights for Showtime and will call Maskaev-Peter. "His skill level has gotten better, and he's still a very powerful fighter, and I think only two kinds of fighters will beat Peter at this point: either a big, tall, skilled fighter who can really box, or a big, tall, skilled fighter who can really punch. Maskaev is one of those heavyweights who is kind of in between those two things. He's kind of a boxer-puncher. And when boxer-punchers face *really* hard punchers, the result is usually not so great for the boxer-puncher.

"Having said all that, Maskaev has a certain skill set that, if he were to perform at his optimum level, he could do some good things in this fight. He can be a very straight puncher and an accurate puncher, and he does have reasonable movement. I'd love to suggest Maskaev should be in the fight, but Peter is the favorite."

One big reason Peter is favored is that all square jaws are not built alike. The nearly neckless Nigerian takes a punch extremely well—as you'd hope he would, given his total lack of head movement. Only Wladimir Klitschko, a fairly murderous puncher, has been able to hurt him, and it took him until the 12th round to accomplish that. Peer has yet to taste the canvas in his pro career.

Conversely, Maskaev's chin is the subject of constant scrutiny. All five of his defeats have come by knockout, one from a soft-looking punch (vs. Whitaker), one from an ordinary puncher (Sanders). His confidence has been rebuilt, his skills polished, his career righted ... but can a dented chin be repaired? Rahman's a good puncher and he wasn't able to do serious damage against Maskaev last year, but Peter hits even harder than "The Rock." Maskaev has to be elusive against Peter, and has to make sure that his punches get there first, because if they get there at the same time, and if they land bombs in equal numbers, Maskaev figures to find himself on his back eventually, dreaming

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Wladimir Klitschko came off the floor to win a bruising decision over Peter in September 2005. A rematch between the pair could lead to the crowning of a new universally recognized heavyweight champion. But if Wladimir beats the Maskaev-Peter winner, the two brothers will never fight to decide who is the true champ.

of the greater payday he could have made against Vitali Klitschko.

Which may just be all the motivation he needs to come out and fight the perfect fight.

"This is a pivotal fight for Oleg Maskaev," Bernstein said. "Obviously, they were hoping to do the Klitschko fight so that he could make monstrous amounts of money and then, win or lose, that was an effective evening for him. This fight against Peter becomes a really important one to win, because it's only really effective if he prevails and sets the stage for higher paying fights."

If Maskaev prevails, however, and takes a cash-out mentality into a fight with Vitali—or even if he takes a magnificent mentality in but finds that he can't beat the massive Ukrainian anyway—it's really ineffective for the sport of boxing. Those hoping to see a legit champion emerge have to root for Peter, because, regardless of who would have the better chance of beating Vitali, there's at least a glimmer of hope that Vitali would rather return to the political ring than share a ring with Peter.

The Klitschkos have been fairly forthcoming about their reluctance to deal with Don King, who owns an equity interest in Duva Boxing and therefore has a piece of Peter. Still, Vitali has said he'd like to face whoever wins Maskaev-Peter, and Bernstein believes he deserves the benefit of the doubt when it comes to courage.

"The code of the Klitschkos, for the most part, is you fight who you need to fight," the Showtime color man said. "Maybe I could be wrong, but it seems to me that they don't really shy away from too many people."

Maybe so. And maybe on the flip side, if Vitali is loathe to fight Peter and deal with King, maybe Wladimir will take the same stance, and we'll be no better off than we are now. But at least Duva and Peter have the right attitude.

"Our plan is very simple: Win the title, then unify the titles," said Duva. "I'm willing to offer right now, if Sam wins the title, we fight Vitali first, and then knock out his brother second. I think it's fair to say Sam and Wladimir have both improved since they fought, they both are at their peak right now. Wladimir vs. Sam, if Sam wins the [WBC] title, especially if he beats his brother first, is the biggest heavyweight fight in years. And I would love to make that happen."

There are a few "ifs" in there, and Maskaev vs. Peter is the first big "if" that will determine the direction in which the division goes. It has the potential to have a major butterfly effect on the entire sport. And if it somehow leads to that WBC belt ending up in Vitali Klitschko's hands, that will sting like a bee for every boxing fan out there. ■

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Rafael Marquez

"I'm A Perfectionist"

Based solely on his ability, accomplishments, and fan-friendly style of fighting, Rafael Marquez should be among the most popular and well-known fighters in the world. Unfortunately, he is not, which says far more about mainstream media coverage of boxing and the preference throughout much of the world for higher-weight boxers than it does about Marquez.

Even Marquez' impressive knockout victories over such outstanding fighters as Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson and the previously undefeated Tim Austin failed to enhance his fame anywhere near as much as they should have. But his thrilling up-from-the-floor TKO of Israel Vazquez, in March 2007, to win the world junior featherweight championship has boosted him up the pugilistic pecking order a few more notches, and he now stands on the cusp of achieving the goals he's been fighting for since turning pro in 1995.

For much of his career, Rafael, 32, has labored in the shadow of his older brother, WBC super featherweight titleholder Juan Manuel. But even though Juan Manuel has fought bigger names and is a splendid fighter in his own right, Rafael is considered by many to be slightly superior due to his greater firepower.

Together, Rafael and Juan Manuel are considered perhaps the best boxing brothers of all-time. Currently, both men are highly placed on THE RING's pound-for-pound ratings, with Rafael number three and Juan Manuel number four.

Next for Marquez, 37-3 (33), is his first defense of THE RING 122-pound world championship, an August rematch with Vazquez. And even though there are many other worthy contenders at junior feather, the featherweights had better start looking over their shoulders because Marquez' future plans include an invasion of the 126-pound division.

In May, Marquez made the trip to Las Vegas for the Oscar De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather showdown, and on the day of the fight, Rafael and his adviser/co-promoter, Jaime Quintana, sat down with THE RING's bilingual correspondent, Brent Matteo Alderson, for an extended interview. Alderson reports:

"One of the things that makes Rafael great is his desire for perfection, which has helped him develop into one of the very best fighters in the world. As much as he loves the sport, it was also very apparent that Rafael is disenchanted with the business side of boxing, which he feels has hampered his progress. More than anything, he wants the big fights that will add to his legacy and his bank account—and he wants them now!"

The Ring: How old were you when you started boxing?

Rafael Marquez: I was six years old. My father fought professionally and had around 40 fights. He started out fighting at flyweight, then went to super flyweight, and eventually moved up and stayed bantamweight. He trained under Arturo "Cuyo" Hernandez, who had numerous champions throughout his life, with the last one being Ricardo Lopez. When we were a little older, we had the opportunity to go and visit and train with Cuyo.

When my father started training us, he wasn't fighting anymore and he showed us things step-by-step. Before you can run, you have to learn how to walk, and he showed us foot movement, how to throw a jab, how to move around the ring. He taught us the basics from an early age.

The Ring: How old were you when you had your first amateur fight?

RM: I was six or seven years old.

The Ring: When you first started fighting, did you know that you had the talent to be a champion?

RM: I didn't know it, but my father knew it. I was involved in my training, learning how to move around the ring, how to throw punches correctly, and just training hard, hitting the bag.

The Ring: What was the most prestigious amateur tournament that you won?

RM: I won a tournament in the Federal District called The Tournament of San Mateo. There was this kid from Tepito, and he was a good fighter, real strong, and my father told me, "You have it, son, you have everything, the talent, the speed. You can beat this kid." And I went out there and won the fight and the tournament.

The Ring: How long was your father your trainer?

RM: He still trains me; he handles everything in camp all the way up until the day of the fight. Nacho Beristain is

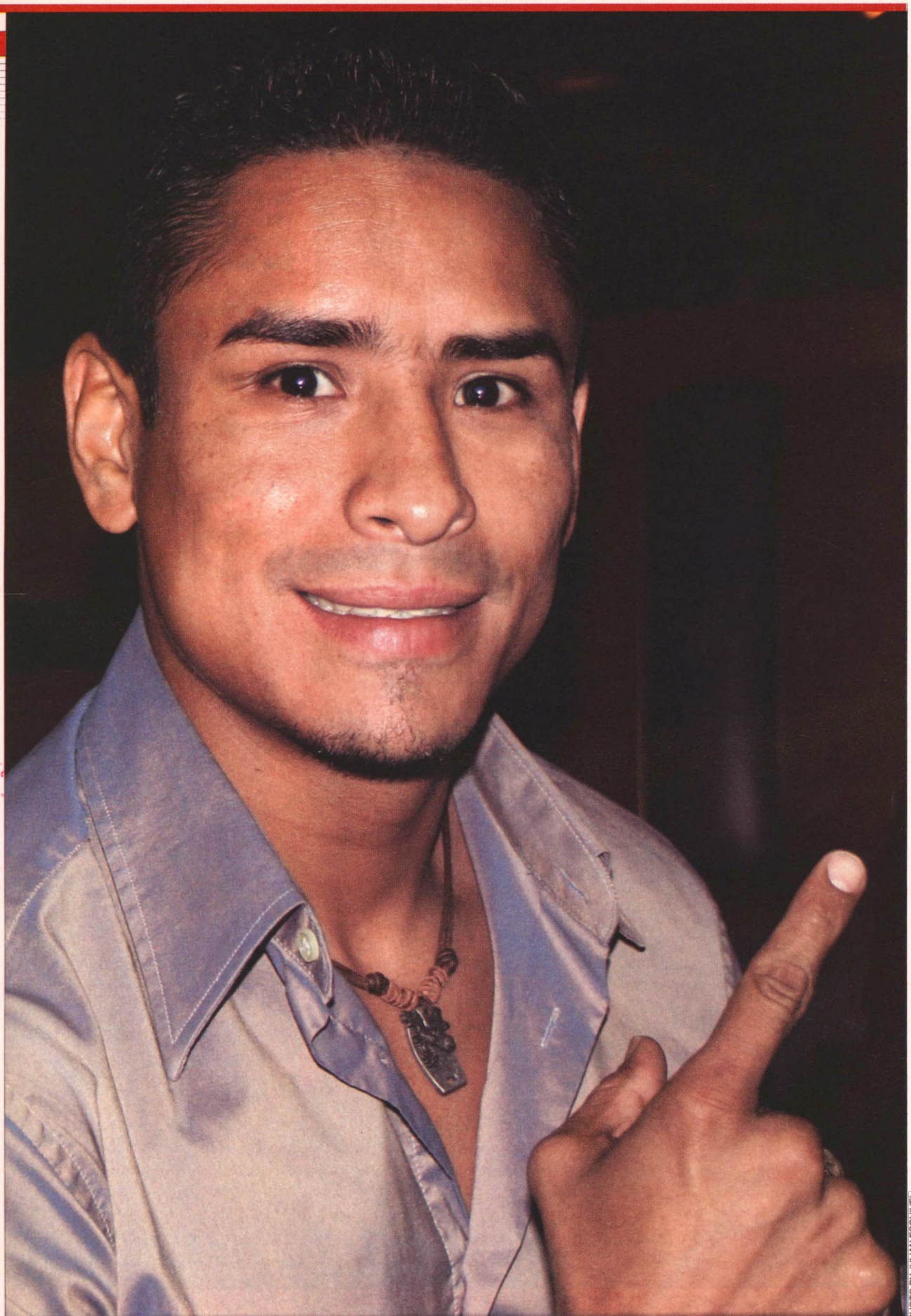


PHOTO BY JULIAN ESQUIVEL

my manager. My father is behind me on my left and Nacho is behind me on my right side. My father's the one who trains me and runs the training camp. Nacho comes in and reminds me of everything I need to do: use the jab and try not to trade too much when I don't have to.

The Ring: Are you happy with Nacho?

RM: He's like my family. I started with him. He always stays calm and his presence in the corner makes me feel secure. It brings focus and tranquility to the fight.

The Ring: Where do you train when you're getting ready for a big fight?

RM: I train in Nacho's gym in the Federal District by Iztacihuatl (a volcano). I go running at the bottom of the volcano. When Gutty Espadas fought Erik Morales the first time, I trained with him. He should have gotten the decision in that fight. We went running high in the mountains, and I didn't like it. I train hard and give it 100 percent, but I don't like training at really high altitude because there isn't any oxygen. Your head hurts; you don't feel good.

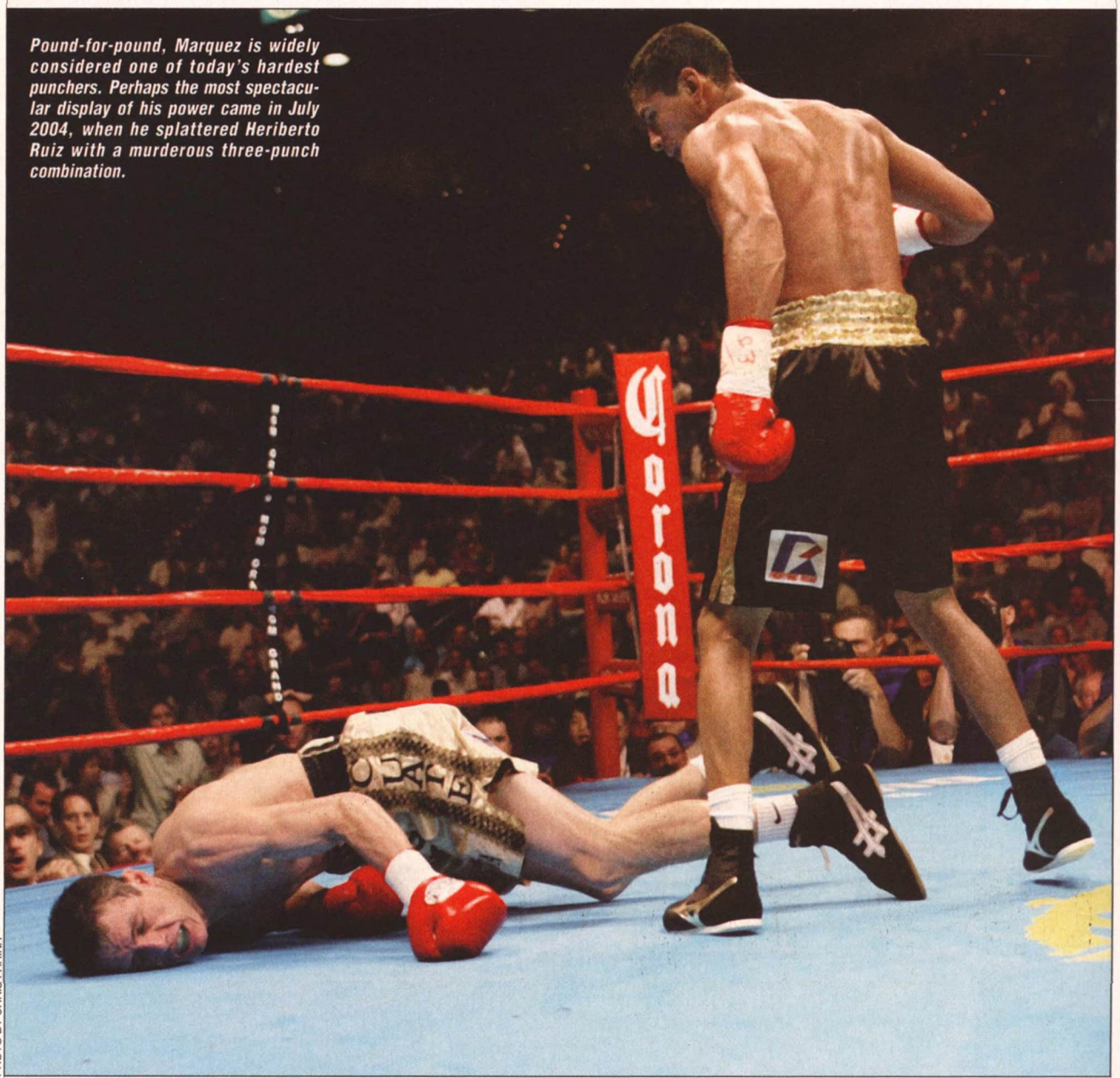
The Ring: Tell me about your training schedule.

RM: I go running at 4 a.m. until 5. Then I go to Nacho's gym in Toluca and train there until around 7 a.m. Then I go to my house to eat breakfast, rest, and take a nap for a couple of hours. Then, at 12 p.m. I go back to the gym. It's kind of far, so I get there around 1:30 and train until around 5 p.m. Then I go to my mom's house to eat dinner and then get home around seven to my house and go to bed around eight.

The Ring: That sounds like a rigorous schedule.

RM: I train real hard so I can achieve the level of conditioning necessary to be a champion.

The Ring: How long does it take you to run a mile?



Pound-for-pound, Marquez is widely considered one of today's hardest punchers. Perhaps the most spectacular display of his power came in July 2004, when he splattered Heriberto Ruiz with a murderous three-punch combination.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

RM: I don't know what a mile is, but I run three kilometers in 7½ minutes. And that's with hills.

The Ring: What do you do when you're not preparing for a fight?

RM: I rest. I do things, work out a bit, but basically I relax until I have to get ready for a fight.

The Ring: You're a *Chilango*, a person from Mexico City.

RM: Yes, I was born in Mexico City, the Federal District.

The Ring: Did you ever see the film *Amores Perros*? And if so, how did your neighborhood compare to the one in the film? [*Amores Perros* is a Mexican film that takes place in Mexico City and was nominated for an Academy Award in 2000. It was directed by Alejandro González Inaritu, who later directed *21 Grams* and *Babel*.]

RM: Yeah, I saw it and the neighborhood where I grew up was worse than the one in *Amores Perros*. It was a tough neighborhood. Drugs were always around, there was always violence, and there were always predators looking to rob you. Criminals, narco-type figures, were always hanging around.

The Ring: What's the name of the neighborhood where you grew up?

RM: Ejercito Constinalista, Estapalapa. It's a place that a lot of people want to leave, and, fortunately, our father provided us with an avenue to get out, but the problems were always there. A lot of people wanted to impose their will on you, and even though we boxed, people still wanted to fight with you or cause trouble. And you had to face it.

The Ring: Do you still live in Mexico City?

RM: I live in Cuernavaca, Morelos (a suburb of Mexico City).

The Ring: Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera have made comments about the rivalry between *Chilangos* and *Fronterizos*, people from the border region. Can you comment on this rivalry?

RM: It's real. When I was living in Tijuana, people were like, "You're a *Chilango* and we don't want you guys here." I got into some fights because of that because people noticed my accent. People in Mexico City don't really care. They have something against us; we really don't have anything against them.

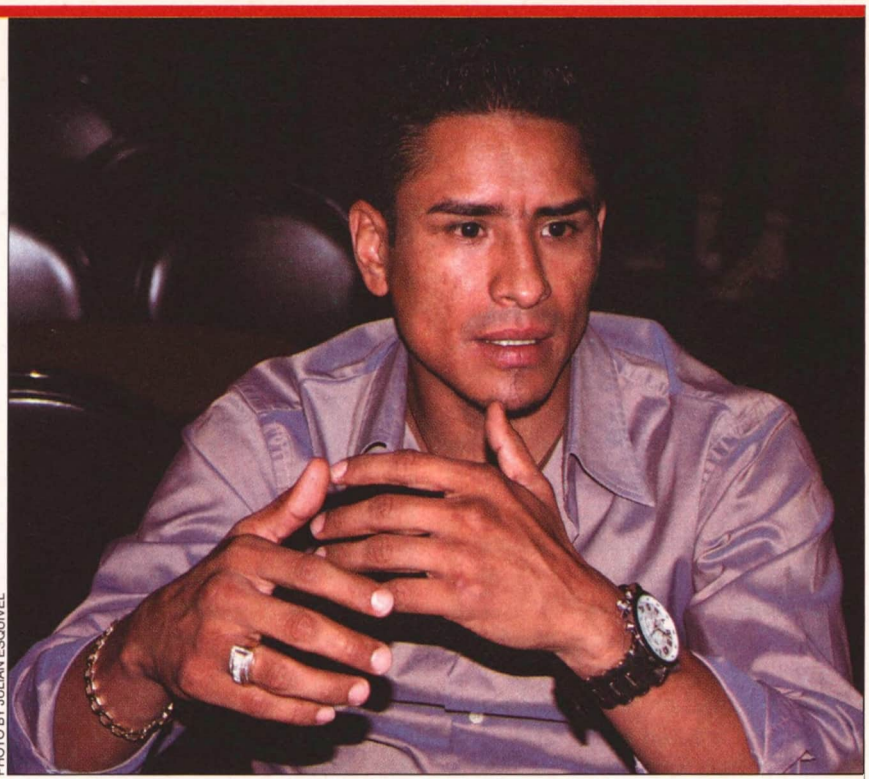


PHOTO BY JULIAN ESQUIVEL

"Nacho Beristain is like my family. I started with him. He always stays calm and his presence in the corner makes me feel secure. It brings focus and tranquility to the fight."

The Ring: Had you always planned to follow in your brother's footsteps?

RM: Juan Manuel turned pro first and I followed him, but he was a couple of years older than me. I was restless. I had a sister in Tijuana and thought, *I'm going to go to Tijuana for 10 or 12 days*, but I ended up staying there for almost two years.

The Ring: Did you ever meet Erik Morales when you were living in Tijuana?

RM: Actually, I only worked out at the house by myself, shadow boxing, exercising, doing road work in the mountains, but I didn't go to the gym because I was working and it took a lot out of me.

The Ring: What type of work were you doing?

RM: I painted dolls in a factory—G.I. Joe figures, Batman dolls. One day before getting off, the director called me up to his office and made me the head painter. I'm a perfectionist, and he knew that I was meticulous and wanted me to supervise the other painters because he knew that I would demand their best and set a standard of excellence. I like to do things right, I like to put my best foot forward and it give my best. After a while, I went back to Mexico City to find myself. I wanted to see what I had.

The Ring: Do you still paint?

RM: Sometimes my son comes home with projects and says, "Papa, help me with this project, help me with this drawing," and that's about it.

The Ring: How many kids do you have?

RM: I have a boy and another one on the way.

The Ring: You and your brother, Juan Manuel, are married to sisters. How is that working out?

RM: It was his fault because he married her sister *(laughs)*.

The Ring: What do the sisters say about you guys fighting?

RM: Before a fight I don't want to see anybody. After a fight I want the whole family to be with me, but before I don't want anybody around, it's complete concentration. There's no family. I lock myself in my room. They bring me food, but I'm always concentrated on the task at hand.

The Ring: You returned to Mexico City to turn professional when you were 19 years old.

RM: I returned and my father asked me what I wanted to do, and I told him, "I'm here to work my ass off, to give it my all. I want to train, I want to fight." My father was training Manuel, and at the time he had five or six professional fights.

The Ring: Tell me about your professional debut against Victor Rabanales, a former titleholder with more than 60 fights.

RM: They said it was going to be an exhibition. I was an amateur! I wasn't going to fight a guy with over 60 fights without any experience, but I was in the fight and I fought hard up until the ninth. He hit me hard in the second round and I thought, *This isn't an exhibition,* and became angry and got into the fight. But I was basically an amateur fighting a world champion, and I think it was the first time in history that someone turned pro against a world champion.

The Ring: I'm not sure if he's the only other one, but I know that after winning a gold medal in the 1956 Olympics that Pete Rademacher fought Floyd Patterson for the heavyweight title in his first pro debut.

RM: I didn't know that.

The Ring: So what happened after the fight with Rabanales?

RM: I continued to working in the gym, continued with my training.

The Ring: Who was managing you at the time when you had the fight with Rabanales?

RM: Nacho was, but he thought it was an exhibition bout. He didn't go because he had a prior commitment, but he didn't know either. Come on, we wouldn't have taken a fight with a world champion when I was an amateur. No f___ing way!

The Ring: You lost a couple of other fight early in your career. What happened in those fights?

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

After winning a very close decision over Mark Johnson in 2001, Marquez knocked out "Too Sharp" in the eighth round of a 2002 rematch. The impressive performance helped move Marquez closer to a title shot.

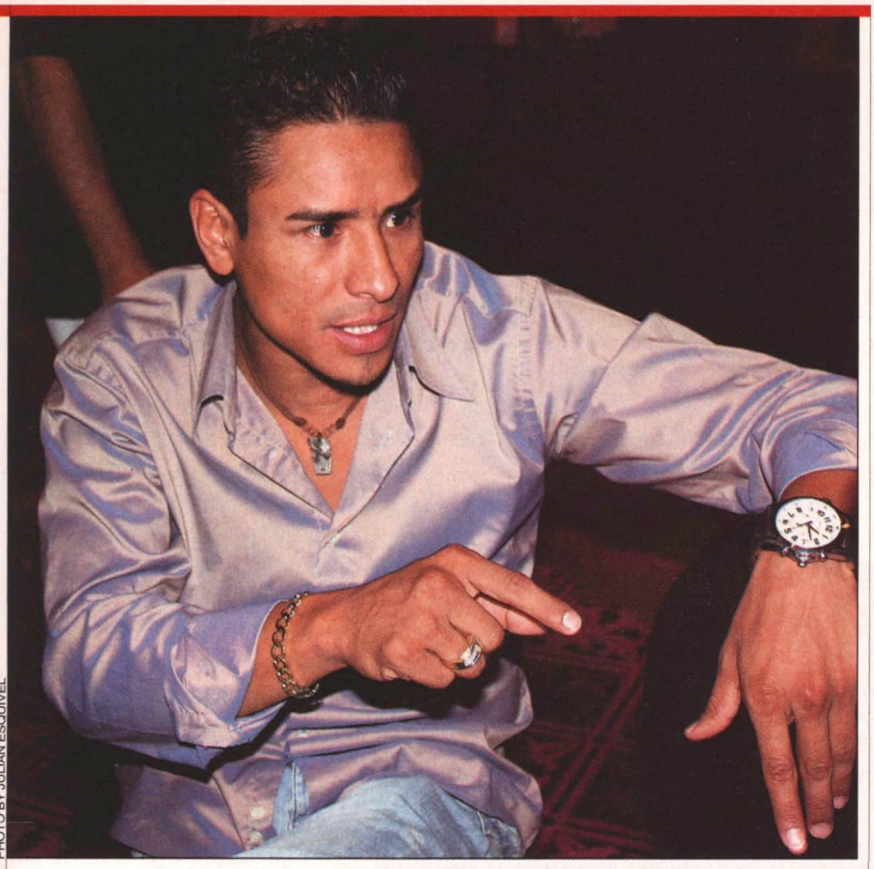


PHOTO BY JULIAN ESQUIVEL

"I grew up in a tough neighborhood. Drugs were always around, there was always violence, and there were always predators looking to rob you. Criminals, narco-type figures, were always hanging around."

RM: The fight with Francisco Mateos wasn't on the level. It was a robbery. He was headbutting me, and they were acting like he was hitting me with punches. Then he hit me with a few punches, and the referee jumped in and stopped it. Truthfully, in my heart, I don't think anybody has beaten me. Nobody has knocked me out. Those losses early on were circumstantial.

The Ring: In 2001, you fought Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson. Tell me about that fight.

RM: They announced Johnson as the winner. The fight was close, real close. So I changed and went back to the hotel, and then someone from Top Rank came to my room and said, "Did you know you won the fight? There was a problem with the cards and you won it." I was like, "That's great," but it really didn't hit me until Too Sharp came up to me in the hotel lobby and said, "I want a rematch, I want to fight you again." That's when I realized that I won the fight and that it was a legitimate victory.

The Ring: Did you think you won the fight?

RM: It was real close, but I thought I won it by a point, maybe.

The Ring: How good was Johnson?

RM: I looked up to him. We were both with Forum Boxing earlier in our careers, and I viewed him as a star, I really admired him. Matter of fact, I got the call from Nacho one day and he told me there was a fight with Mark Johnson, and I was like, "What, Nacho? Mark is a badass, he's f___ing

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good." Then Nacho asked, "Do we take the fight or no?" I said, "Let's take it, let's fight Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson." Nacho wasn't even sure that I would take the fight, but I did.

The Ring: After such a close first fight, how were you able to dominate him in the rematch?

RM: I was properly prepared; I trained harder. In the first fight I only trained for a month, but for the second fight I trained hard for two months. Also, I thought Mark was a little bit slower the second time and I knocked him out with a hook in the eighth. I had him down in the seventh, but I finally got him out of there in the eighth. "Good bye!" I learned a lot in those bouts, fighting someone of that type of stature.

The Ring: A couple of fights later, you fought Tim Austin for the IBF 118-pound title. Tell me about that fight.

RM: They said, "You want to fight this guy that's undefeated and hasn't lost and has been a champion for nine years?" And I said, "Sure, let's do it." You know something, he never made the weight for that fight.

The Ring: He didn't?

RM: He stepped on the scale and jumped right off, and they said he made it.

Jaime Quintana: It was a strange situation. His camp was saying they were going to knock us out in two rounds, and we said, "Okay, we appreciate this opportunity." Then he jumped on the scale and the scale went up and then went down, and he jumped off the scale and everybody said he made it. The commissioner said, "That's good enough." I wanted him to get back on the scale and stand there until the measurement bar stopped swaying, but the commissioner wouldn't allow it. He said, "No that's fine. He made the weight and if you want to make a stink about it, then there's not going to be a fight."

The Ring: It was a great fight.

RM: Oh yeah, he hurt me and I hurt him. I remember he hit me with a right and I went to the ropes because I was hurt. He hit real hard.

The Ring: Out of all the fighters you've fought, who was the best?

RM: Tim Austin. He was fast, he hit hard, and he was experienced. Also, the last guy I fought, Israel Vazquez. He's a very tough fighter, he punches hard, and he's very savvy, very conscious of what's going on in the ring.

The Ring: Did he hurt you at any time?

RM: He hurt me in the third round, but we are both warriors, and my conditioning allowed me to come through it.

The Ring: You were with Top Rank before and now you're with Gary Shaw. What happened with Top Rank?

RM: There were people in the middle and I didn't like the situation. Another thing, when I fought Tim Austin for the title, they told me, "You're going to make $137,000." So I won the title and asked, "How much am I going to make now that I'm the champion?" and they said,

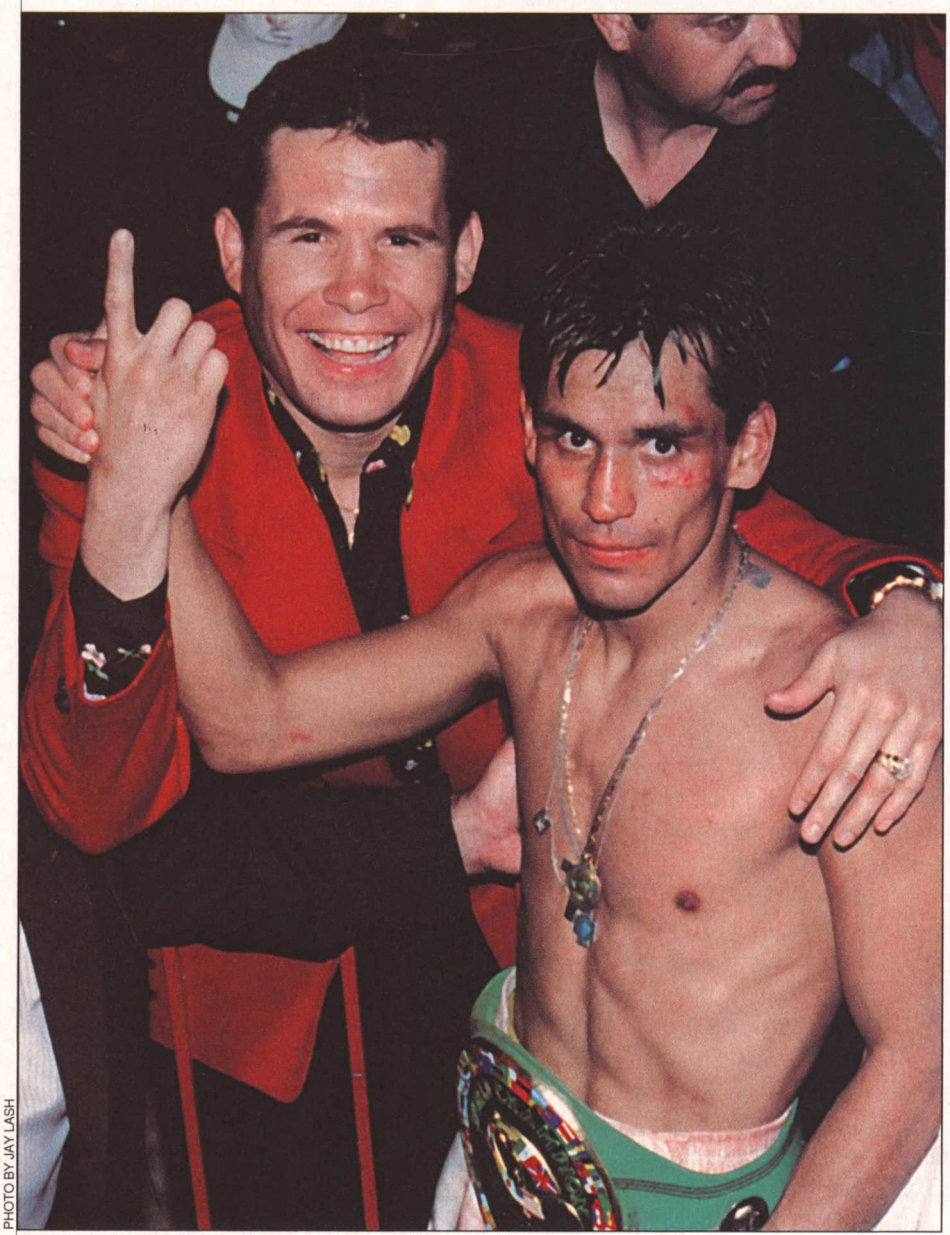

PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Marquez considers Julio Cesar Chavez and Ricardo Lopez as the two greatest Mexican fighters of all-time. When he was younger, Marquez had many bruising sparring sessions with Lopez.

PHOTO BY JULIAN ESQUIVEL

"Before a fight, I don't want anybody around; it's complete concentration. There's no family. I lock myself in my room. They bring me food, but I'm always concentrated on the task at hand."

"$125,000." If I made $137,000 as the challenger, then why was I going to make less as the champion? Now I'm champion of the world and you are going to pay me less! So I finished my contract and left.

The Ring: You signed with Gary Shaw and your brother signed with Golden Boy. Why didn't you guys sign with the same company?

RM: I wanted to fight. I was sick of waiting around. I was ready to fight. I was ready to defend my title.

JQ: Obviously, there were offers from various promoters, which included Top Rank. Don King was also in the picture, but because of some of the things we knew about him and had observed, we didn't want to sign with him.

The Ring: Why didn't you sign with Golden Boy?

RM: We talked to Gary first and we may have moved a little bit too quickly, but at the time we didn't have the same type of confidence in Golden Boy. And Gary was already talking about the Vazquez fight, and I was ready to fight. I said, "Let's do it, let's sign and get some fights going."

The Ring: Are you happy with Shaw?

JQ: We're not unhappy, but we're not 100 percent satisfied either. Rafael wants to fight more frequently. That was one of the things that he promised us. Top Rank kind of put us on the shelf. Rafael wants to be a fighting champion. As co-promoter, I'm a little dejected over the fact that Rafael isn't fighting more often. One or two fights a year does not cut it.

RM: I want to fight three or four times a year. I want the breaks between fights to be shorter.

JQ: The glory that we achieved by beating Vazquez should have catapulted Rafael's career. We need to take advantage of this momentum and I'm not sure that Gary is doing that.

RM: There should have been more people at my last fight. That was a real fight and this isn't a game—preparing for a match is a very daunting task. Being a fighter is a very tough occupation. You have to be 100 percent, not 80 or 90, you have to be 100 percent.

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The Ring: If you want to keep active, why don't you take some non-title fight in Mexico, like Chavez used to do?

RM: It's possible.

The Ring: How much did you get for the Vazquez fight?

JQ: More than $200,000, but less than $300,000. Rafael was a champion at 118 moving up to 122, where Vazquez was champion. They were both champions.

The Ring: Was it hard for you making 118 pounds?

RM: The last time it was.

JQ: No, he can make it easy, but he didn't have the motivation. If there was a big fight, a big payday, he could make it, but there wasn't, and he's not going to sacrifice to make 118 when there are bigger fights, better opponents at 122 pounds.

RM: He's right, I could.

The Ring: Shaw has the promotional rights to Vic Darchinyan. Would you go down to 118 to fight him?

JQ: No, no, no. Rafael fighting Darchinyan would be like Rafael slapping a little kid!

RM: I wouldn't have anything to gain and everything to lose. What am I going to achieve beating Vic Darchinyan? Nothing.

The Ring: What about Jorge Arce?

JQ: If Christian Mijares just dominated Arce, what's Rafael going to do to him?

RM: Exactly. Arce isn't on my level. There are no interesting fights at 118.

The Ring: You just beat Vazquez and won THE RING championship at 122 pounds. How gratifying was that win?

RM: It's a privilege, an honor to win and defend THE RING championship.

The Ring: You are scheduled to fight Vazquez in a rematch, right?

RM: Yes, in August.

JQ: Actually, we want the fight in August because we want Rafael to defend THE RING magazine championship, God willing, again in December or November. Rafael has the energy and he has the motivation. He has entered the final phase of his career and he wants to take advan-

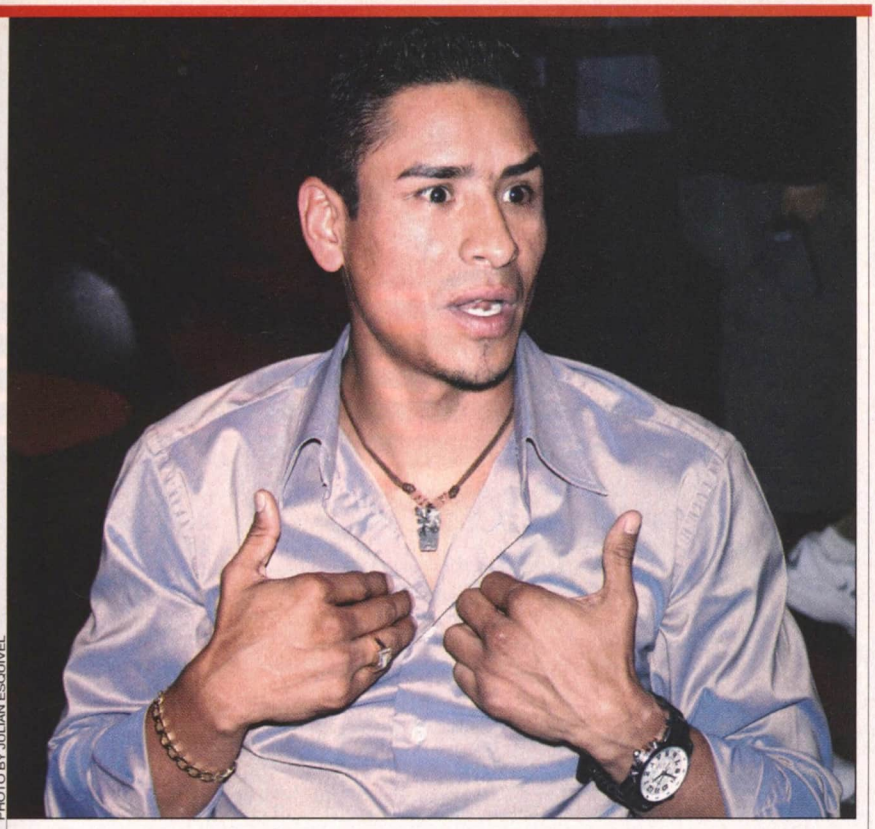

PHOTO BY JULIAN ESQUIVEL

"If I made $137,000 as the challenger, then why was I going to make less as the champion? Now I'm champion of the world and you are going to pay me less!"

tage and keep active and fight in the biggest fights possible.

The Ring: Who's your all-time favorite fighter?

RM: Julio Cesar Chavez, and the second is Ricardo Lopez. We used to spar.

The Ring: You consider those two to be the two greatest Mexican fighters ever?

RM: Yes, most definitely.

The Ring: Tell us about sparring with Ricardo Lopez?

RM: We've trained together many times, and he used to beat up on me a lot. He used to hit me at will. My face used to hurt and I used to get headaches sparring with him. I thought to myself, *I have to get the best of this guy, at least once.* So, I told Nacho I want to box Ricardo. And that day I thought to myself, *I'm in good shape, it's my day and I'm ready. Nothing is going to stop me.* And it was my day. On that day, I got the better of Ricardo Lopez! I beat him up pretty good. I even busted up his eye, and after that he didn't want to spar with me anymore. In the gym, I've always boxed with other champions, Daniel Zaragoza, Victor Rabanales.

The Ring: How much longer do you want to fight?

RM: Until my body says I can't. Until then, I have my goals: I want to establish myself at 122 and win a title at featherweight before it's all over. In the next couple of years, I want to achieve everything that I can.

The Ring: If you could fight anybody, who would it be?

RM: I want to fight the champions, the best fighters out there. I want the highest-rated 122-pounders available. Then, after three more fights at 122, I want to go up to 126 pounds. I have the height and I have the power. I want to be a three-division champ. ■

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Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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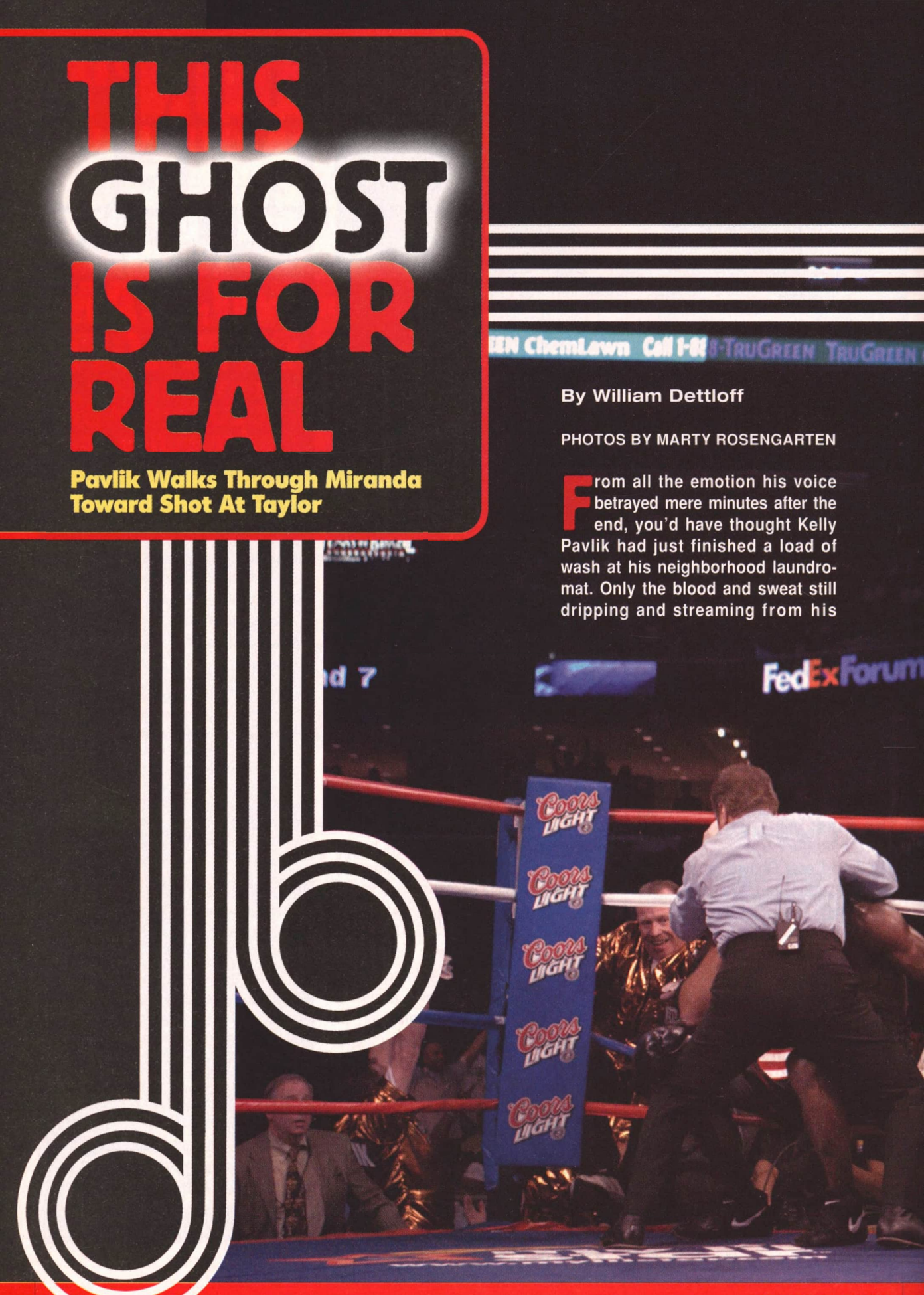
THIS GHOST IS FOR REAL

Pavlik Walks Through Miranda Toward Shot At Taylor

By William Dettloff

PHOTOS BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

From all the emotion his voice betrayed mere minutes after the end, you'd have thought Kelly Pavlik had just finished a load of wash at his neighborhood laundromat. Only the blood and sweat still dripping and streaming from his



KELLY
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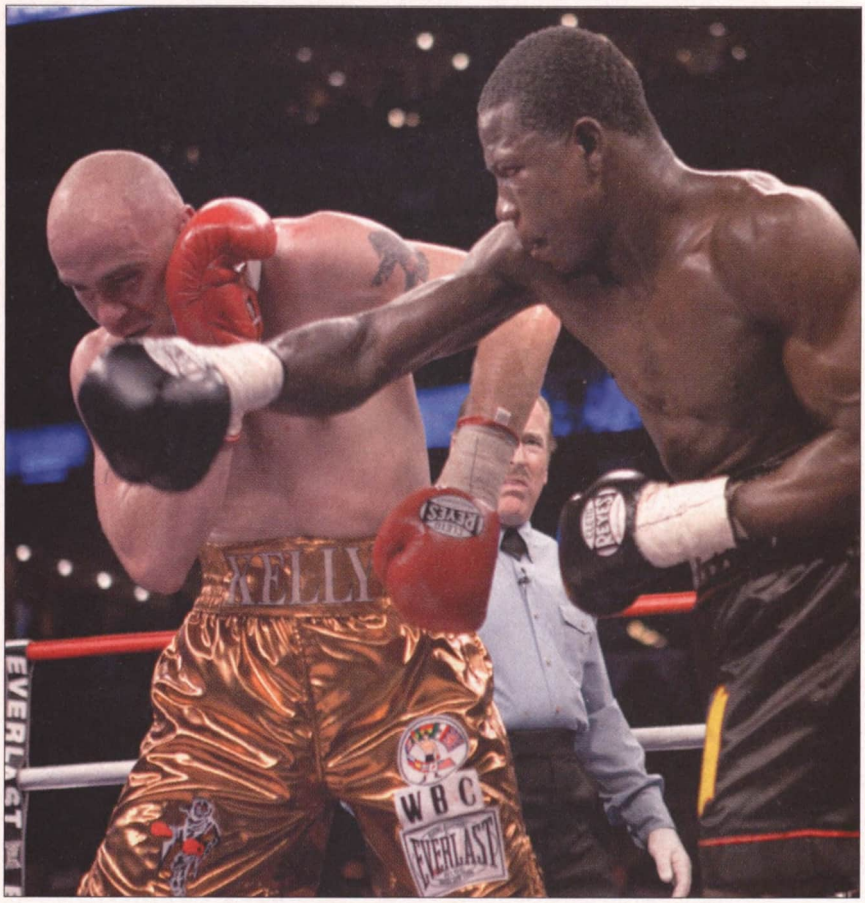
Pavlik didn't hesitate in going after Miranda from the opening bell. "The Ghost's" game plan was to force Miranda into going backward. The approach took Miranda completely by surprise.



The Ghost proved he could take a punch. Miranda poured some offense on Pavlik in the second round, smashing a counter right off Pavlik that forced him to fight off the ropes. The sequence proved to be the best two-way action of the fight and brought the crowd to its feet.

face in protest at the last half-hour's brutality spoke of what he'd been up to, which had little to do with spin cycles or rinsing.

Without seeing him, you never would have guessed that Pavlik had just outslugged Colombian Edison Miranda in the most important win of a career that appears ready to combust. It mattered little if he was speaking with HBO's Larry Merchant right after the fight, with fight reporters and assorted other miscreants at the postfight press conference an hour later, or to ESPN2 viewers a full week on. Pavlik related his fight plan and the details of the struggle in the matter-of-fact, almost bored manner the rest of us might fall into while describing the furnishings of our dermatologist's office or the contents of our sock drawer.

"We wanted to keep him going backwards, because we knew he's not a sound fighter when he's moving backwards," he said. Pavlik said this not in a deadpan or emotionally restrained way, but as would any seasoned, professional craftsman. This was an expert plumber describing how he'd snaked a sewer line or put together a sink trap. "He hits hard," he allowed. "He hit like we expected him to, but we prepared for it, and we were able to take it."

That Pavlik strode from his corner at the fight's opening bell and promptly walked in a straight line toward Miranda, thought by many to be the 160-pound division's hardest puncher, is testament to his calm self-belief. Many fighters will tell you beforehand what they will do against a puncher. Many (the world's best fighter pound-for-pound among them) will testify that he'll stand right in front of the puncher and trade with him. Then he gets in there and his instincts for self-preservation take over. Pavlik recognized that the best way to beat a puncher is to back him up and he employed the balls and the tools to do it.

You won't see Pavlik engaging in screaming matches at press conferences or bawling at a fight's conclusion. If it were another era we would,

without irony, describe him as a cool customer or a cool cat. In an earlier era yet, he might be described as a John Wayne-type, calmly and confidently going about his business without histrionics or emotional displays: the strong, silent type. Today we call him no worse than the world's third best middleweight, and maybe the next world champion.

But none of us knew that beforehand, or at least most of us didn't, and you couldn't blame anyone for thinking Miranda, 28-2 (24), might add Pavlik to his list of kayo victims. Miranda's wins over Howard Eastman (KO 7), Willie Gibbs (KO 1), Allan Green (W 10), and a bizarre loss to top-rated Arthur Abraham in Germany—in which Miranda broke Abraham's jaw in three places and was penalized five times—justified his status as the division's premier puncher and resident Godzilla.

Pavlik, meanwhile, was seen by many as a prospect of unknown value that had been protected by his promoter, Top Rank. The most noteworthy victims on his resume were rugged but crude Jose Luis Zertuche (KO 8); Bronco McKart (KO 6), who years earlier had been a junior middleweight contender of note; and Grady Brewer (KO 2), seemingly a lifetime removed from his triumphs on the TV reality boxing series The Contender.

Indeed, Miranda spent much of his allotted time in prefight press conferences dismissing Pavlik by calling out champion Jermain Taylor, whose company he hoped would be his great reward after he stopped Pavlik. This idea was abetted by the bout's appearance underneath Taylor's defense against Cory Spinks. "When I take the crown from him, I will hire him to be my sparring partner," Miranda said through a translator. He looked at Taylor and said, "How about Cory Spinks fighting Kelly Pavlik and Edison Miranda fighting Taylor for the same amount of money. Can you accept that?"

The belief many held that the prelim would overshadow the main event, and not by a little, seemed likely to come to fruition when

Miranda was stunned by this right in the sixth, spelling the beginning of the end for the brash Colombian (above). Pavlik sends Miranda down for the second time in the sixth (below), as referee Steve Smoger begins his count. But it wasn't until the seventh, when the one-sided action continued, that Smoger called it off at the 1:54 mark.

Pavlik, 31-0 (28), drew a bee-line to Miranda in the bout's opening seconds and began strafing him with right hands. If you can imagine what a lion might feel at being chased and cornered by a water buffalo, you can understand the panic that appeared to grip Miranda almost immediately and that manifest in a confused and fairly incoherent response. It took him most of the round to collect himself, but by the round's end, he was heaving earnest, if mostly weightless, right hands at Pavlik.

It was an editorial on Miranda's own self-belief that in the second he banged home a big right-hand counter early and for most of the

round fought Pavlik mightily from the ropes. The round featured a blistering, nearly two-minute exchange that prompted a standing ovation from the modest crowd at the FedExForum in Memphis and appeared to set the stage for a wild slugfest on the level of Gatti-Ward I.

Alas, Pavlik was too good for that, and so we had to settle for a slambang shootout that always tilted just enough in Pavlik's favor. Over the next three rounds, he mauled Miranda, spearing him with long right hands and hooks and continually keeping him offbalance—not with deft footwork, but with punches and pressure.

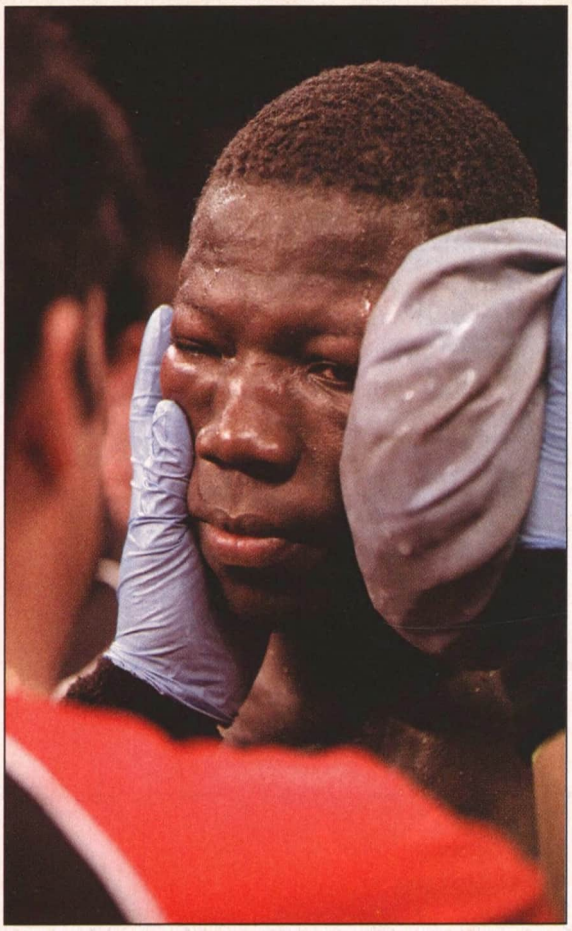
Miranda made it fun and entertaining by soaking it all up and responding exclusively with zinging straight rights that, fairly regularly, caught Pavlik flush. The blood that poured from Pavlik's nose from the second round on was evidence that it was not an easy fight, and that Miranda was in it. Indeed, Miranda had one of his best rounds in the fifth when he appeared to get a second wind. After taking several hard shots, he pounded his chest and egged Pavlik on before landing three hard rights, one after the other.

Still, you could see Miranda's success would be temporary. Pavlik was sharper and better technically, and, most importantly, his refusal to move backward robbed Miranda of the forward momentum he needs to get leverage. A puncher is doomed when he can't hurt his opponent, and he can't hurt anyone if he can't get leverage.

The wisdom of Pavlik's strategy was proved definitively in the sixth, when a pair of exceptionally clean rights put Miranda down hard near the ropes. A second knockdown followed, and many referees would have stopped it there. Steve Smoger waited until early in the seventh, when Pavlik gave him what he was looking for by pounding Miranda again, forcing the referee's hand at 1:54 of the round. "We didn't want him to set the pace or the tempo with big right hands," Pavlik all but yawned afterward. "I think toward the end of the fight we sort of wore him

Pavlik beats Miranda to the punch with a hurtful-looking left jab. While some critics thought that Top Rank had coddled Pavlik, his performance proved that he'd been brought along at just the right pace.

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER FIGHTWIRE IMAGES



Miranda dismissed Pavlik prior to their fight, focusing his prefight verbal venom on reigning world champ Taylor. But the overconfident slugger ended up swollen and battered, and now it's Pavlik in line for a title shot.

down and he didn't have much left in him at all."

What followed was about one would expect: instant recognition not only from the usual suspects that comprise boxing's cognoscenti, but also among the general media and political infrastructure in and around Youngstown, Ohio, Pavlik's home turf. Top Rank, accused before the win of coddling Pavlik, or at the very least of stifling his progress, now appears to have brought him along perfectly. Pavlik's exciting win, coupled with Taylor's wretchedly uninspired and near unwatchable decision win over Spinks right afterward, has positioned Pavlik as Taylor's likely next challenger—even if some feel the win over Miranda is overrated.

"Pavlik looked great against Miranda, but Miranda sucks," Lou DiBella, Taylor's promoter, told The Ring. "I was saying for weeks that Pavlik was going to win because he's a good fighter and Miranda can't fight. I never thought he was a good fighter. Miranda was a creation of these recent knockouts he's had, and in this age of the UFC, knockouts mean everything. But Kelly did a good job. He's a good fighter. He did exactly what he was supposed to do to a guy like Miranda. I give him all the credit he deserves."

By the time you read this, a Taylor defense against Pavlik may already be signed; DiBella seemed certain it would happen. But there remained at press time the possibility that super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe, and not Pavlik, would be next for Taylor. One might have thought Taylor's terrible effort against Spinks would disqualify him from such a fight, but Calzaghe told the British press the day after Taylor's win that he remains hopeful the match would be made.

"I'm just hoping he doesn't take up anymore fights against blown-up welterweights and instead gives the fans what they want to see—and that's a fight against a champion," Calzaghe told the BBC. "I don't understand what his mindset is. He beat Bernard Hopkins, and I thought he would want to cement his legacy by fighting the best. But he hasn't looked very good in his last two contests where he's been picking easier opponents. People are getting bored of him picking easy fights. He's not getting respect because he's not fighting anybody. If he wants respect, then he needs a genuine challenge."

Circumstances at press time suggest that Pavlik rather than Calzaghe will present that challenge, and that's fine with us. Many, based on the performances of the fighters in the ring that night, will favor Pavlik. It's hard not to; Taylor appears to be regressing despite the presence of Emanuel Steward in his corner, while Pavlik appears to be peaking. But it's not a fair comparison: Miranda was right in front of Pavlik, there to be hit. Pavlik, once he steeled himself to walk headlong into the fire, had only to be himself and to punch. Taylor had a less physically dangerous but far trickier assignment in Spinks, a quick, defensive-minded southpaw, of all things. Who can look good against that?

At any rate, it's hard to envision a Taylor-Pavlik bout being any less exciting than was Pavlik-Miranda. It certainly won't be a night at the laundromat. It'll only sound that way afterward. ■

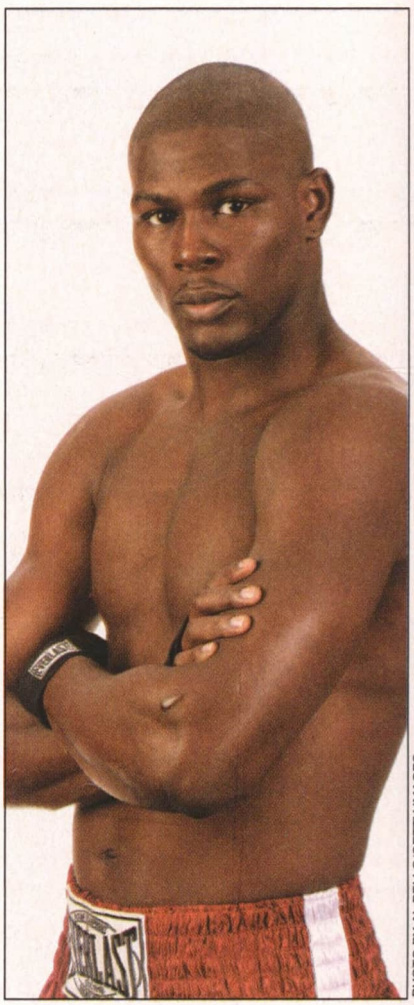


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor's lethargic performance against undersized Cory Spinks caused some doubt whether or not he could handle Pavlik's pressure and punching power. Lou DiBella, Taylor's promoter, said it seemed likely that The Ghost will be next for the middleweight champion.

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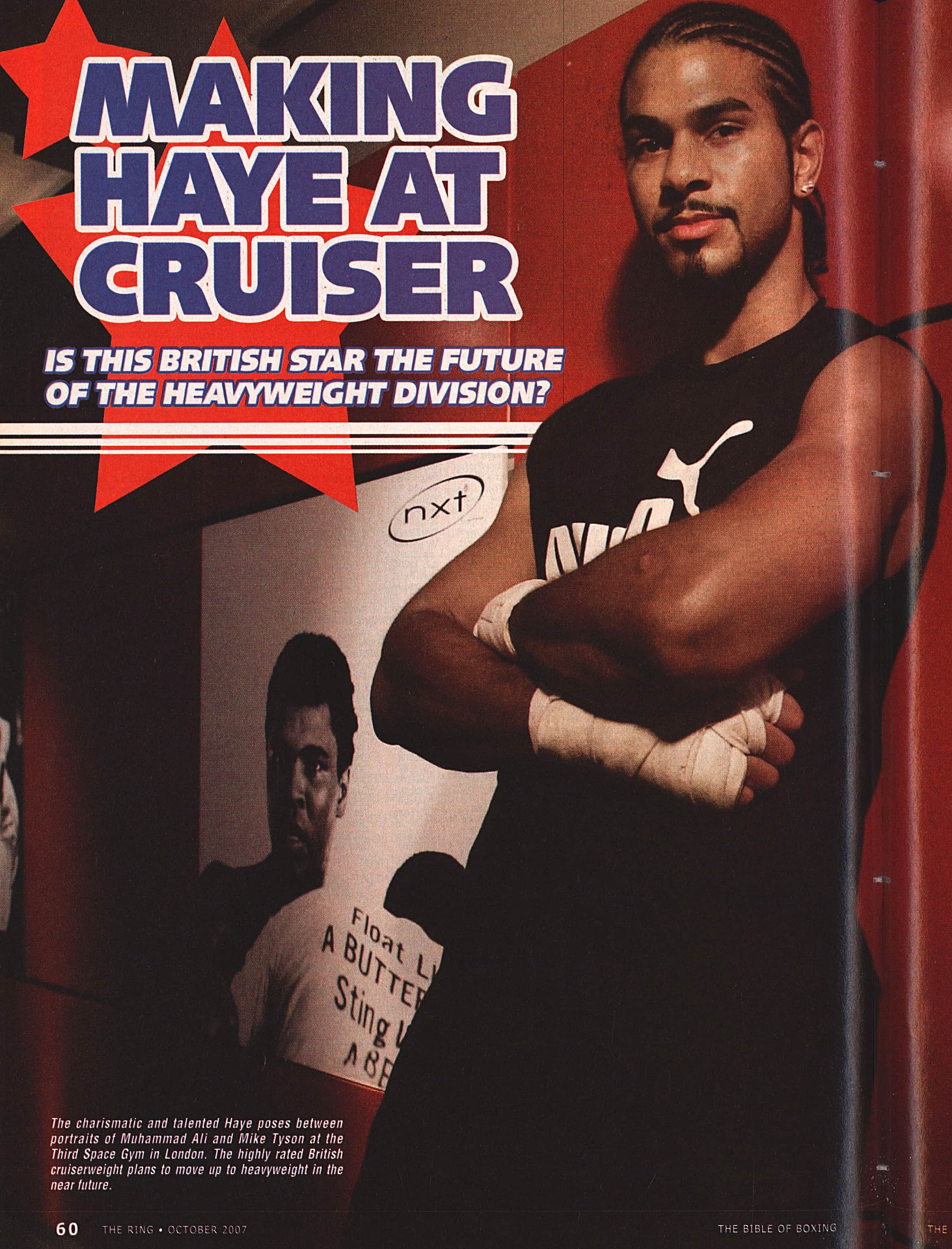
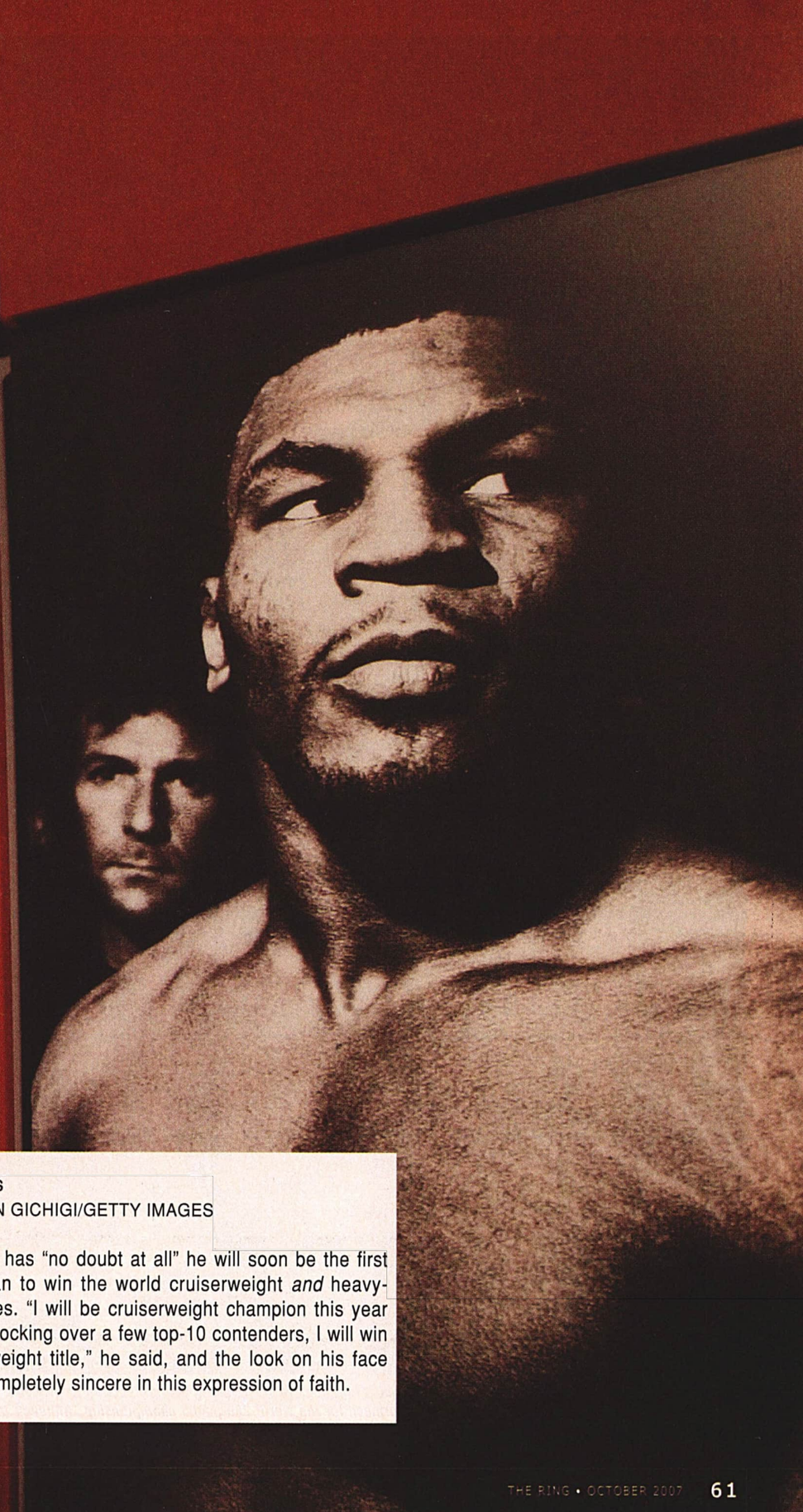
MAKING HAYE AT CRUISER

IS THIS BRITISH STAR THE FUTURE OF THE HEAVYWEIGHT DIVISION?

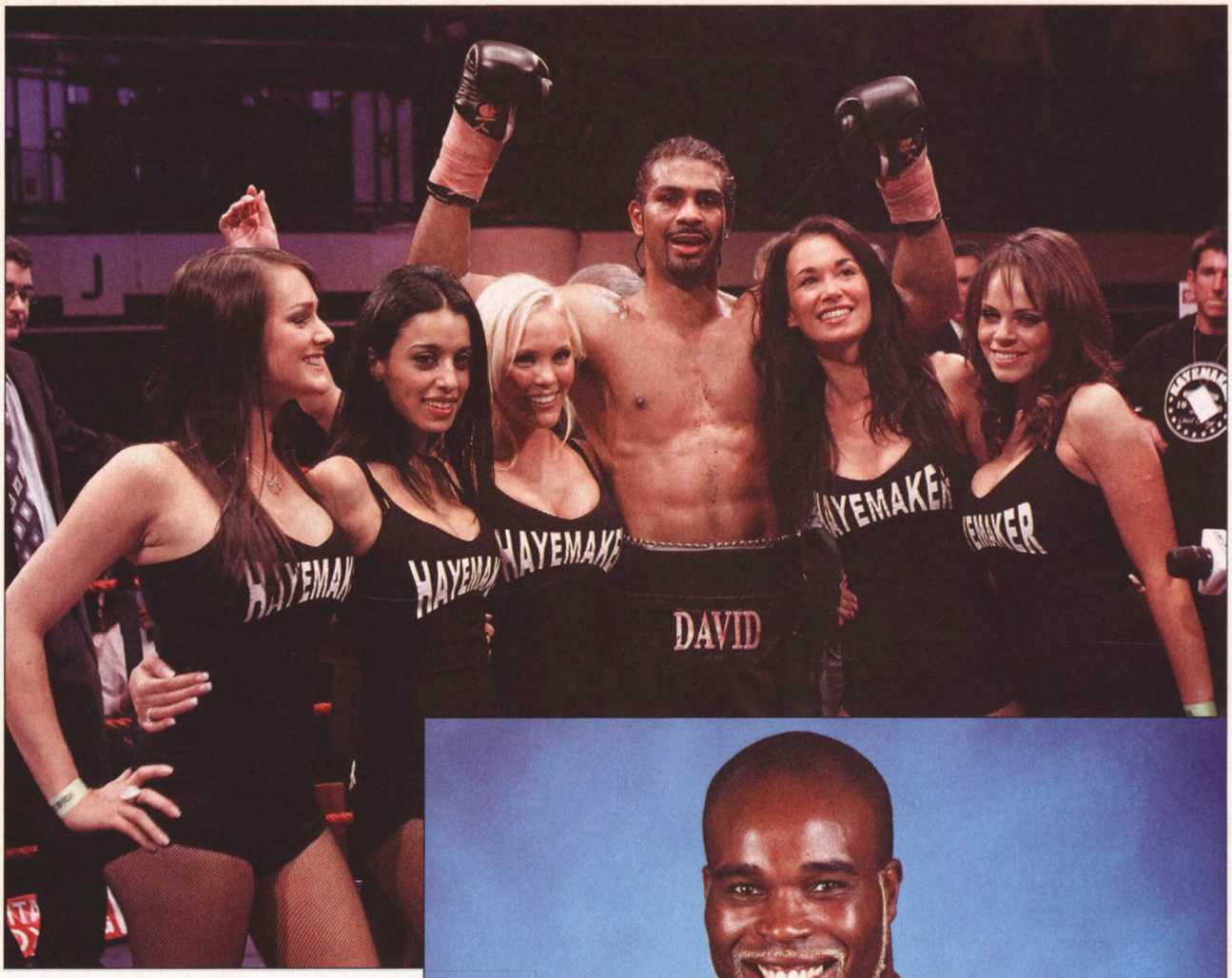


The charismatic and talented Haye poses between portraits of Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson at the Third Space Gym in London. The highly rated British cruiserweight plans to move up to heavyweight in the near future.



By Gavin Evans
PHOTOS BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

David Haye has "no doubt at all" he will soon be the first Englishman to win the world cruiserweight *and* heavyweight titles. "I will be cruiserweight champion this year and then, after knocking over a few top-10 contenders, I will win the world heavyweight title," he said, and the look on his face suggests he is completely sincere in this expression of faith.



Haye celebrates his November 2006 kayo of Giacobbe Fragomeni with a bevy of round card girls. Despite his reputation as a lady's man, Haye is beginning to be perceived as a serious athlete, thanks to the fact he's finally dedicating himself fully to his career.

The handsome and charismatic former model has long enjoyed a reputation as the most naturally talented boxer in Britain, a young man blessed with an exceptional blend of speed, reflexes, and innate power. But, until recently, this reputation came with several worrying caveats: chin, stamina, and the playboy lifestyle of a confirmed lady's man.

The lifestyle question has more or less been put to bed, because Haye is now known as a boxer who stays fit all year round, trains exceptionally hard, always watches his diet (he has no option because he admits that making 200 pounds is one almighty struggle), and lives a quieter public life than before.

And the stamina doubts that arose

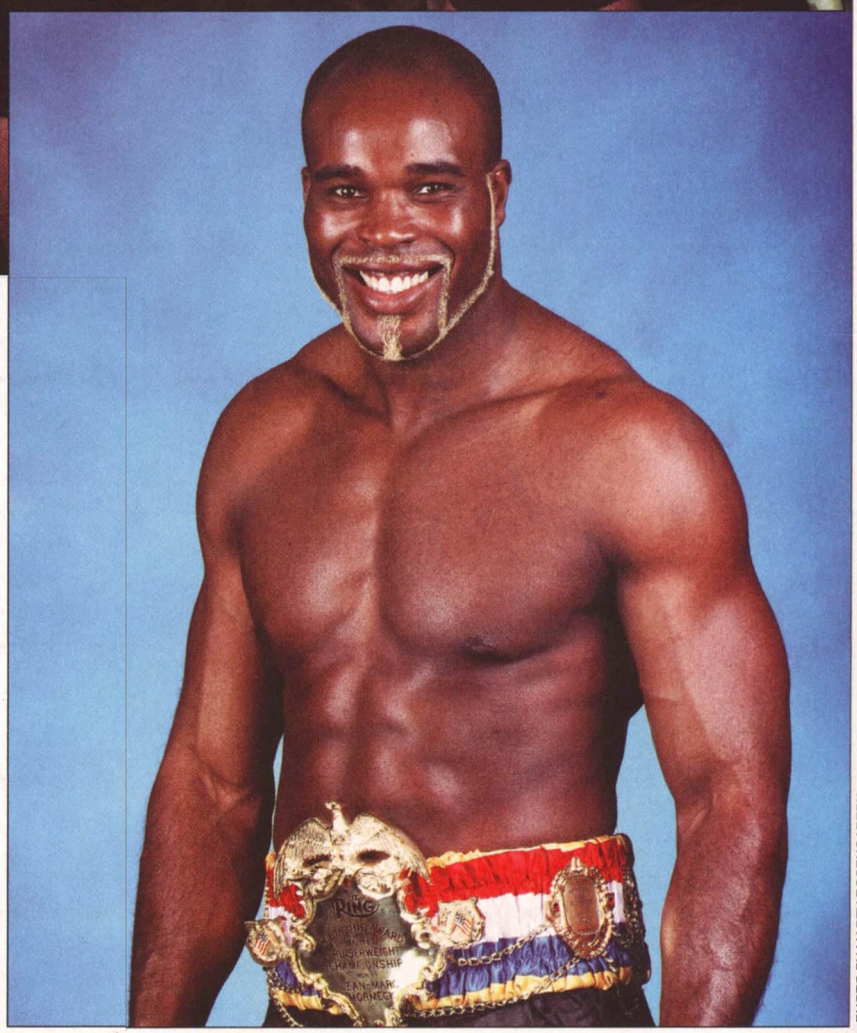


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Next target: Before abandoning the cruiserweight division, Haye will challenge Jean-Marc Mormeck for the world 200-pound championship. Although making weight will be a struggle, Haye is confident he can beat the Frenchman.

from the only loss on his record—against Carl Thompson four years ago—are on their way to being settled. Some British traditionalists question his sports science-based approach to training, but he showed a consistently high workrate in stopping Giacobbe Fragomeni in nine and, before that, had no trouble going a leisurely 12 to outpoint Ismael Abdoul.

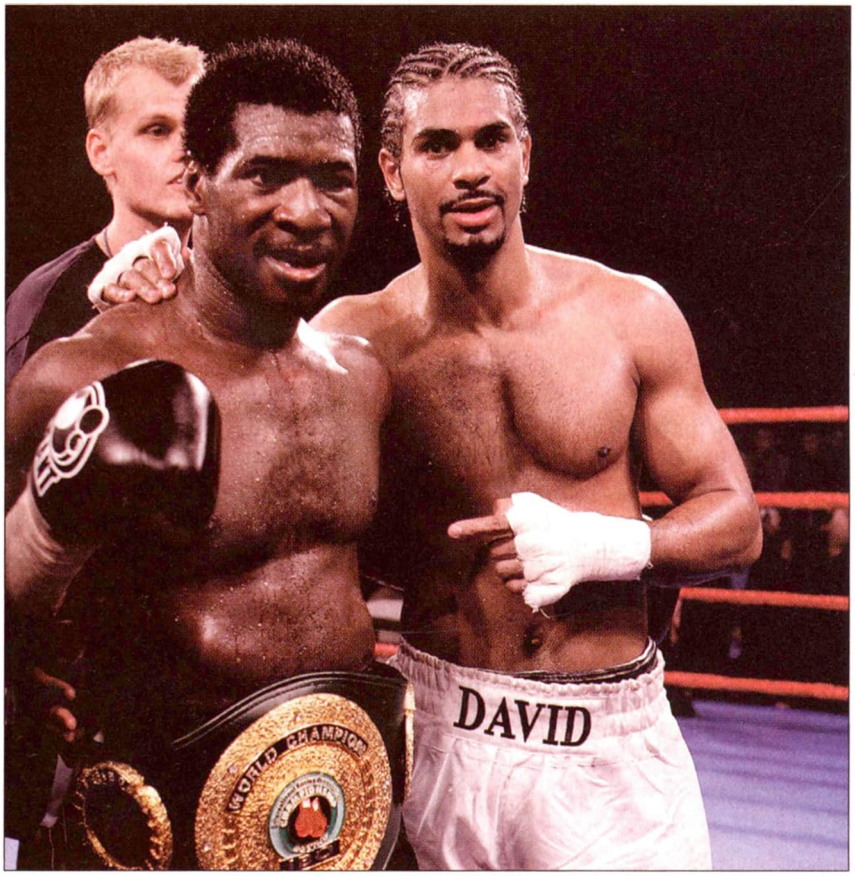
But Haye, THE RING's number-four contender, is banking on the world cruiserweight champion Jean-Marc Mormeck holding to the view that one whack on the whiskers will be enough to put the Englishman away.

"Hopefully, he looks at my win over Lolenga Mock in 2003 and notes that I was knocked down by a super middleweight, and then looks at the Thompson fight and notes that I was stopped by an old man," said Haye. "Because if he doesn't doubt my chin, what chance can he possibly think he has? The way I look at it is that you hit anyone flush on the chin and they can go, especially if they're unfit. But I avoid getting punched on the chin and I stay in shape. And I think my chin is sound."

He'll face Mormeck for the world title in the summer and says the only feasible doubt about him lifting the title comes from the weight question. "It's no secret I struggle hugely to make 200 pounds," he said. "I'm a broad-shouldered 6'3", with an 80-inch reach, and my natural weight is around 228 pounds without bulking up. Right now, I'm 232 and I'm in the gym every day, so it will be very, very hard work, but I'll make it."

The 26-year-old Londoner says he has studied Mormeck carefully in recent years and watched the Frenchman in the flesh when he won his rematch with America's O'Neil Bell in March. "I actually thought he'd beat Bell both times, because he's naturally a better fighter, but in their first fight he was distracted and underestimated Bell. He put it right in the return, but I still can't see what

In his most recent defense of the European cruiserweight crown, Haye stopped previously undefeated Fragomeni in the ninth round at London's famous York Hall venue. Haye displayed a busy work rate against his Italian challenger, thanks to his new dedication to training.



Haye gives props to the only man to beat him in the pros, fellow Englishman Carl Thompson, who came from behind to stop an exhausted Haye in the fifth round. Haye claims that the unexpected loss finally convinced him to buckle down and train diligently.

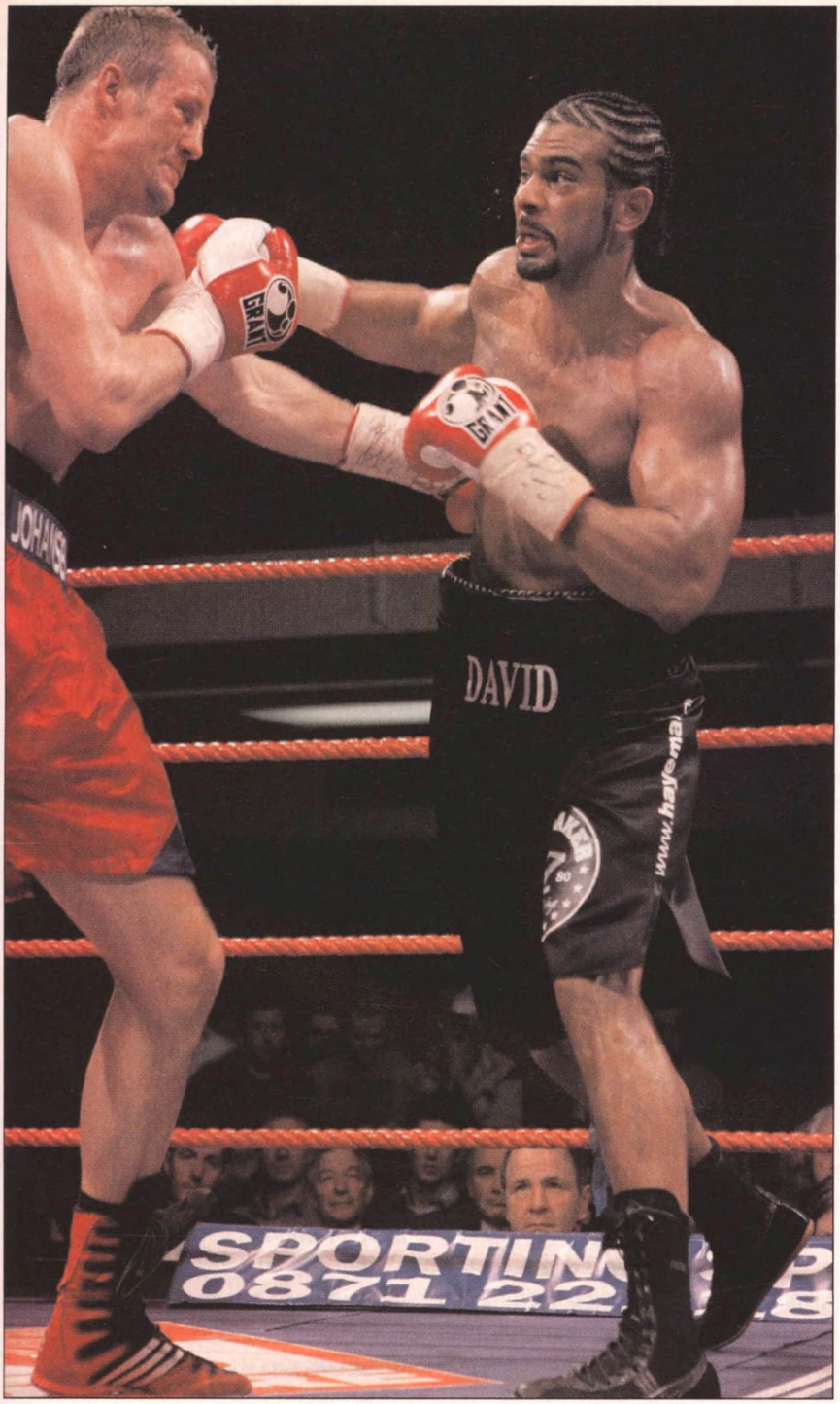
he has to beat me with.

"I'm bigger, quicker, younger, and fresher. I have a far longer reach and I punch far, far harder. The only doubt is weight. At 100 percent, I knock him out quickly, but what if I'm only 75 percent as a result of the weight making? That gives him a chance, but only a small chance. But I think I'll go out there and stand in the middle of the ring and knock him out within three rounds."

Coming back from his bloody but impressive win over the previously unbeaten Italian, Fragomeni (who'd beaten him as an amateur), Haye wanted to settle scores with another British cruiserweight, Enzo Macaranelli, but negotiations with the Welshman's promoter, Frank Warren, broke down when Haye refused to join Warren's promotional stable.

"I think Warren just wanted to use the fight as a carrot to get me to sign for him," said Haye. "We offered Macaranelli £180,000 ($360,000) for an April 27 non-title fight—because I wasn't interested in his WBO belt—

One of Hayes' most impressive victories was his first-round kayo of Alexander Gurov to take the European cruiserweight title in December 2005. By way of comparison, it took Mormeck eight rounds to dispose of the Ukrainian.



During the rebuilding process, following his kayo loss to Thompson, Haye stopped previously unbeaten Dane Lasse Johansen in the eighth round in defense of the European cruiserweight title. All but two of Haye's 20 professional bouts have taken place in England.

on a no-strings, no-rematch basis and they dismissed it. And they went and fought Bobby Gunn instead!"

Haye feels it would have been an easy night's work. "Macarinelli is nothing, really," he said. "He won his WBO belt by beating a mediocre British champion, Mark Hobson. He would come with his upright European style, and as soon as I hit him square, it would be over—two rounds at most."

Macarinelli's chance has come and gone, Haye said, because after Mormeck, only one fight would tempt him to stay at cruiserweight: a return with Carl Thompson, who retired in '05.

"When we fought in 2004, my attitude to the game was wrong and I

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Unable to obtain a bout with Wales' Enzo Maccarinelli, Haye made his first foray into the heavyweight division in April 2007, and looked sensational in knocking out Tomasz Bonin, who had previously lost only once in 38 pro bouts.

wasn't in prime condition," said Haye. "Our plan was to slow the pace, not to slug. So what do I do? I just throw the plan out of the window and blast away for three rounds and run out of steam, and that's how he beats me. The better man on the night won. I've always wanted a return, but his people seemed less keen and a deal couldn't be made. But it's the only fight that would make me stay at 200 pounds, because if you look at my record, in 50 years time I want people to see that I avenged my defeat, just like Lennox Lewis did."

It was a lesson he should really have learned from his amateur days, when he was known both for his immense potential and for his lackadaisical approach to training.

"I would get away with winning on natural talent alone," he admitted. "Because I was so quick and could punch, I would win, but there were some fights when I arrived completely out of shape. I really cut corners."

His talent took him to the finals of the 2001 World Amateur Championships in Ireland, where he met the Cuban favorite, Odlanier Solis Fonte, for the gold medal. After dropping him heavily, Haye ran out of steam and was stopped on the 15-point deficit rule.

"My approach was part of the problem there, and also I damaged my right arm in the semifinals, but mostly it was just that I was exhausted from four hard fights in four days," said Haye. "Still, no question, the better man won."

Despite this result, he continued to show too much hubris and too little application in the professional ranks. It all went more or less according to plan (the only wobble coming when a hard hook to the temple from Lolenga Mock put him down in his seventh fight, but he rose to win on a fourth-round stoppage). After 10 fights, with a win over Arthur Williams under his belt, he was world rated and looked like he was heading for an early title shot.

But then he ran into the hard, extremely determined, and heavy-handed Thompson. Looking back, he insists that the loss was the best thing to happen in his career.

"I'm thankful for it," said Haye. "I hate losing, but the only real damage was to my ego. That fight put a rocket up my arse and it changed my whole outlook, and if that hadn't happened then I'd have continued thinking I could win without training and I would have been found out against someone like Fragomeni."

Instead, he bounced back with a series of impressive wins, including a first-round knockout of world-rated Alexander Gurov for the European title, followed by an eighth-round knockout of unbeaten Dane Lasse Johansen. But the weight issue became more pressing, and when the Macarinelli option fell through,

If he gets past Mormeck and his chin holds up at heavyweight, Haye has the potential to be a major star. A former model, the photogenic fighter has the added advantage of being at ease with the media. Providing all goes according to plan, he could become box-office gold.

Haye asked his trainer-manager, Adam Booth, and promoter Frank Maloney to secure him one heavyweight fight before returning to cruiser for the Mormeck fight. The opponent they came up with was 231-pound Tomasz Bonin, 37-1 (20), who'd won 11 straight since losing on a controversial ninth-round stoppage to Audley Harrison three years earlier.

Haye, who regularly trains in Miami (where Lennox Lewis pops in to offer advice), chose to come in fairly close to his normal fighting weight, 217 pounds ("so I deliberately watched my diet"). He produced a highly impressive display of precision punching. His first punch was a jab that jerked Bonin's head back. After a few bodyshots, he fired a left-right combination, the right landing flush on the side of the jaw, and the Pole went down. A three-punch volley, ending with a heavy right hook, put Bonin down again. He rose quickly, but looked severely shaken. This time Haye jumped on him, battering him to the canvas, and after 105 seconds, it was over.

"Not having to boil down to 200 pounds made a big difference," said Haye, 19-1 (18). "I felt quicker, more comfortable, and in training I was running faster and lifting more. Once I move up properly, I will settle in at around 228 and that will be hard, lean, cut weight, not bulked up at all. I'll be just as quick, but far stronger, and then, over the next three to four years, I will gradually increase so that I'll end up around 240 well-cut pounds."

The Bonin fight served as a way of announcing his future intentions, which he will capitalize on after the Mormeck fight. Haye acknowledges that it would be unrealistic to expect a heavyweight title shot immediately, and therefore looks forward to a short campaign to reach that point.

"I will pick a few contenders out of the rankings and beat them, and then go for the title," he said. "I honestly can't see any heavyweight out there that I can't beat. Some of them may weigh more than me, but, then, is their weight all lean muscle like mine? Not from what I've seen. I'm more than big enough to beat them and I will use my natural advantage against them—speed."

Right now, David Haye stands a notch below the likes of Ricky Hatton and Joe Calzaghe within the British boxing pecking order, but that could change quickly. He's bright, good-looking, superbly built, and highly articulate without being abrasive. But most of all he's potential box office gold as a fighting machine—explosively quick with chilling power, along with a sense of vulnerability that makes you wonder what will happen next. If he can get past Mormeck, we could be in for an exciting ride. ■

Gavin Evans is a British freelance writer and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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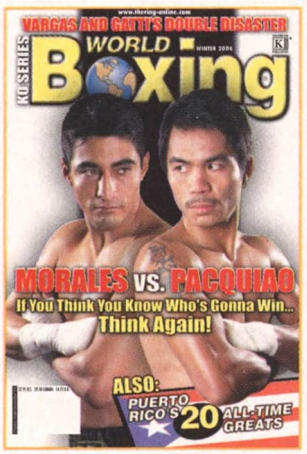

Winter 2006

Juan Meza.

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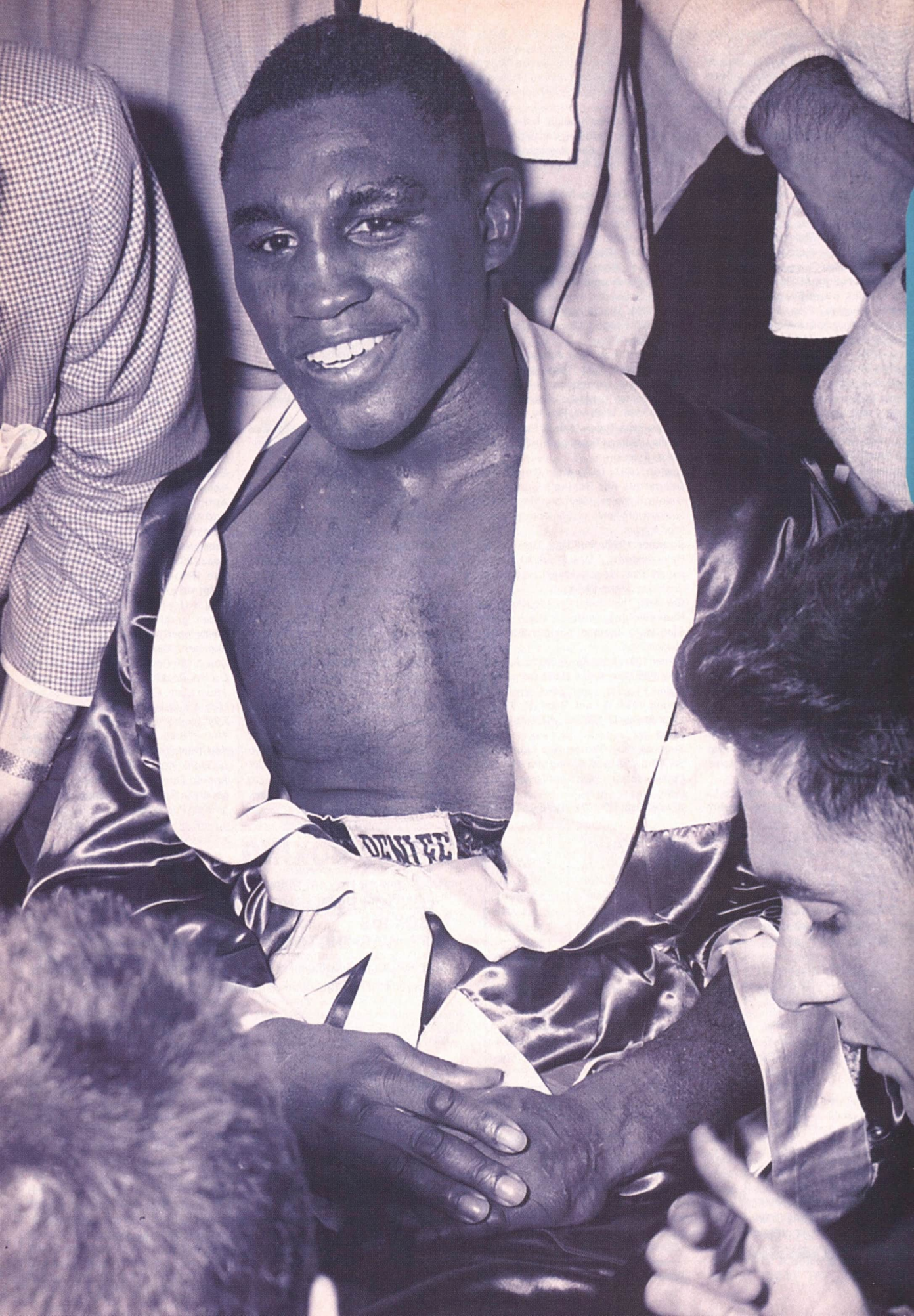


REMEMBERING JIMMY CARTER

Boxing's "Mystery Man"

A smiling Carter (left) holds court with reporters in his dressing room following his 15-round decision over Art Aragon in 1951 to successfully defend the lightweight title. Overall, the media tended to be highly critical of Carter.

By Pete Ehrmann

The first famous Jimmy Carter ruled boxing's lightweight division for three terms in the 1950s. The second famous Jimmy Carter ruled as President of the United States for one term in the 1970s. What they had in common besides their name was that neither was very popular in his time. President Carter was perceived as inept and fainthearted. Champion Carter was accused of often pretending to be.

In one of the milder criticisms after Carter had won and lost the 135-pound title three times, it was written that he "has had a strange career. He has been either overgenerous with the title, or the rankest in-and-outer of all-time."

Sports columnist Bill Corum wrote of Carter, "For my money, he can easily rank with the best lightweight champions who ever faced another man. Jimmy can

Carter puts defending lightweight champion Ike Williams through the ropes en route to a 14th-round TKO victory and the 135-pound title on May 25, 1951. Going into the fight, many considered Carter a "nobody" and gave him little chance of winning.

be as fast and clever as the best. He can punch, he can think; he can box.

"When he wants to."

When Carter didn't want to, his harshest critics said he was following orders from the man known as the underworld overlord of boxing in the Eisenhower era—mobster Frankie Carbo.

Carter was tied to Carbo through Willie Ketchum, a former hearse driver who became the fighter's manager when Carter turned pro in 1946. Carter was born in Aiken, South Carolina, in 1923, and moved to New York City with his family as a boy. A priest taught him how to box, and after some amateur bouts in the military, Carter looked up Ketchum, and in his first four years went 45-9-7.

For all that, heading into the biggest fight of his life on May 25, 1951, Carter was considered "a nobody" (Al Buck), "an obscure pug of small reputation" (Jimmy Cannon), "the mystery man of boxing" (Murray Rose), "a comparative stranger even in his home town" (Associated Press), and so unworthy to challenge Ike Williams for the lightweight title that the National Boxing Association refused to sanction it as a championship fight.

Champion since 1945, Williams hadn't put his belt on the line in almost two years. He had to melt off 20 pounds in the three weeks leading up to the Carter bout. Before 3,594 customers—the smallest crowd to ever watch a title match at Madison Square Garden—2-1 underdog Carter floored Williams four times and won by a TKO in the 14th round.

Carter was hailed as "one of the most startling winners in boxing memory," and "the Cinderella champion," even the NBA fell in line and recognized him as titlist. But not everyone was thrilled.

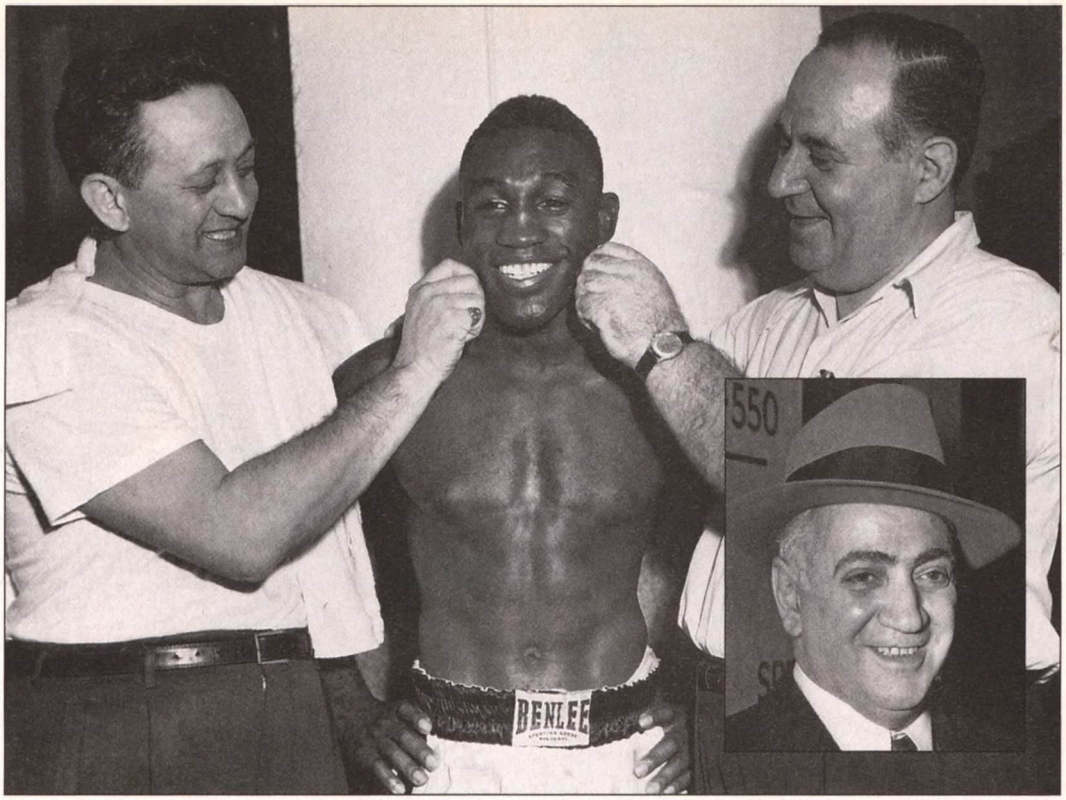
The New York Mirror columnist Dan Parker sneered that the new champion's ring record "wouldn't get him a preliminary bout in Ridgewood Grove back in the days when boxing was something besides a medium for advertising commodities over radio and television," and that the Williams-Carter fight "offered the most forceful demonstration to date of what the combination of racketeer-domi-

nation, weak-spined boxing commission supervision, and destructive IBC policies have done to the sordid business often referred to as a sport."

The IBC was the International Boxing Club, which in '51 held exclusive rights to every world champion from bantamweight on up. The president of the IBC was businessman James D. Norris, but its "arch manipulator" and "Rasputin," as Barney Nagler wrote in his 1964 book *James Norris And The Decline Of Boxing* was Carbo.

According to Nagler, Willie Ketchum, Carter's manager, was "a disciple of Carbo" through whom the sport's top gangster "shared in the management" of the new lightweight champion.

But all that mattered little to Carter. Asked by reporters after the Williams fight about his plans, he said, "I want to fight and make some money."



Carter has his cheeks pinched by trainer Sammy Cherin (left) and manager Willie Ketchum (right), who was closely associated with Frankie Carbo (inset), the mobster who controlled much of boxing at the time.

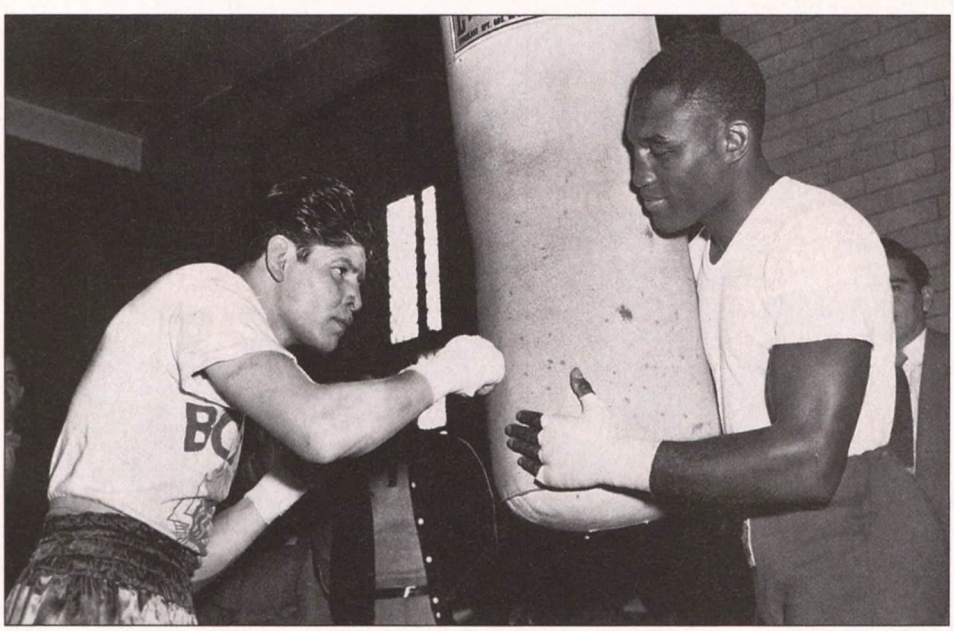
Over the next three months, Carter fought five non-title matches. The first three were knockout victories. After Carter won a unanimous decision in Los Angeles over Mario Trigo in the fourth fight, Ketchum actually apologized for his fighter's failure to put Trigo away and said Carter was "stale from fighting too much."

Funny, then, that just two weeks later the champion was back in the Olympic Auditorium ring. His opponent, "Golden Boy" Art Aragon, a 2-5 underdog, won a split decision on the basis of a strong finish in the 10-round non-title event.

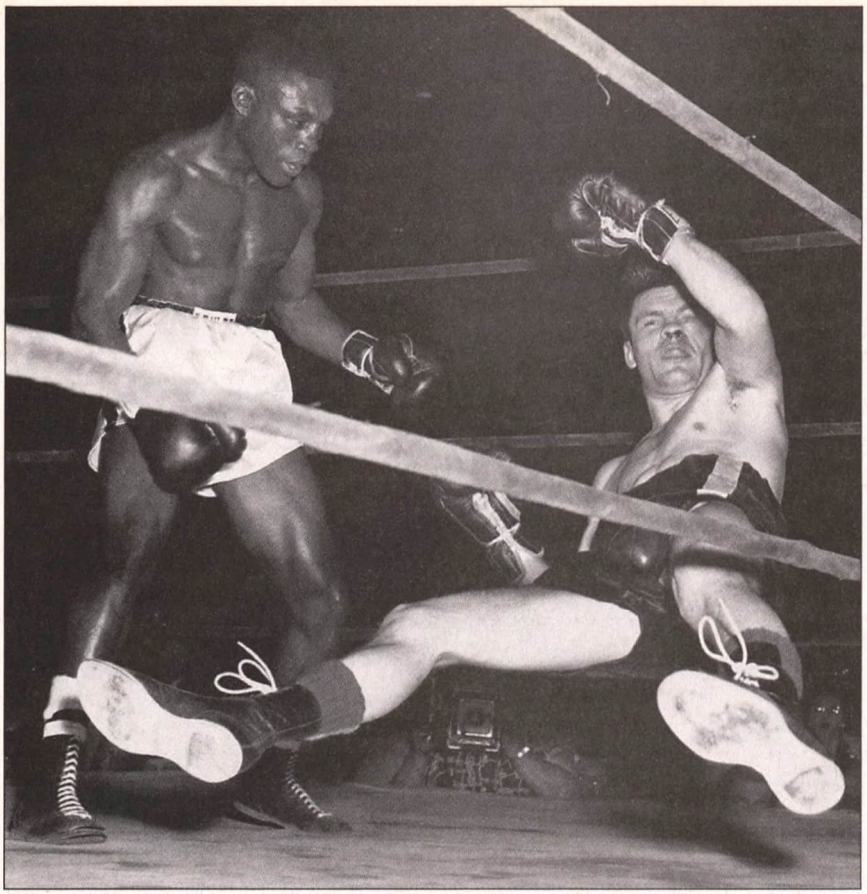
On November 15, 1951, Carter knocked Aragon down three times and won a unanimous verdict in the first coast-to-coast television championship match. The Associated Press account praised the champion for his "cool exhibition of boxing skill."

But to the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, he was merely "an efficient but unexciting fighter" when Carter again decisioned Trigo in the first of three monthly non-title fights in '52.

Returning to L.A. for his second title defense, on April 1, Carter met Lauro Salas, the California featherweight champion. He won a unanimous decision, but the rugged Mexican native came on at the end and put Carter down for a short count



Carter holds the punching bag for Lauro Salas, who had taken the lightweight title away from him in his third defense. Carter regained the belt with a 15-round decision, which at the time made him only the third man in history to regain the 135-pound crown.



Television viewers were offended when Carter was allowed to hand Tommy Collins a savage beating, knocking down his challenger 10 times before the massacre was stopped in the fourth round. Most of the wrath, however, was directed at referee Tommy Rawson.

in the 15th round. "Salas deserved to win," complained Sid Ziff of the *Los Angeles Mirror*.

Six weeks later he got another chance, and, after another whirlwind finish, took Carter's belt on a split decision. The AP called it the "upset of the year." But along press row, eyebrows were going up. Noting the mandatory return-bout clause in the fighters' contracts, Louis Burton of the *New York Journal American* mused that "Carter cannot be accused of deliberately losing, but he couldn't have done it more effectively if he were trying."

The deposed champion himself merely allowed that he "didn't seem to have the zip" against Salas.

In the rematch at Chicago Stadium five months later, Carter had zip to spare in becoming the third man (along with Tony Canzonari and Lou Ambers) to regain the lightweight title. Salas took three of the 15 rounds, tops, before the smallest crowd (5,233) to ever see a championship fight in the Windy City.

"Everyone figured that, no matter what the script was in L.A., Jimmy could and would win this time," wrote Dan Parker.

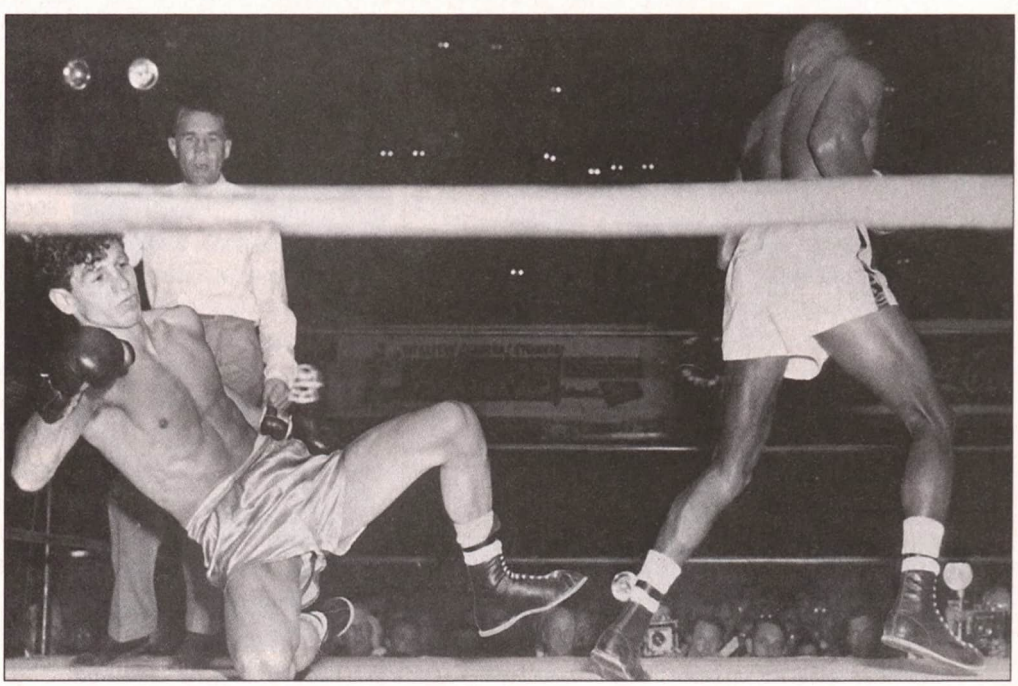
After the fight, manager Ketchum proclaimed, "We'll get some overweight matches and make some dough. Personally, all we are interested in is money."

Looking good in the process was a whole different matter.

In his next three fights, Carter won on points against Archie Whitewater (but "in victory did not look any part of the best lightweight in the world," according to one account), drew with Babe Herman, and lost decisions to Eddie Chavez and Armand Savoie.

On April 24, 1953, Carter almost killed boxing altogether. But it wasn't really his fault, as most of the public's wrath was aimed at referee Tommy Rawson for allowing Carter to virtually dribble featherweight Tommy Collins all over the mat in their televised title bout in Boston. Carter put Collins down 10 times before Rawson finally stopped it in the fourth round. Viewers all over the country called their stations and the newspapers to vent their disgust.

Collins had no business in the same



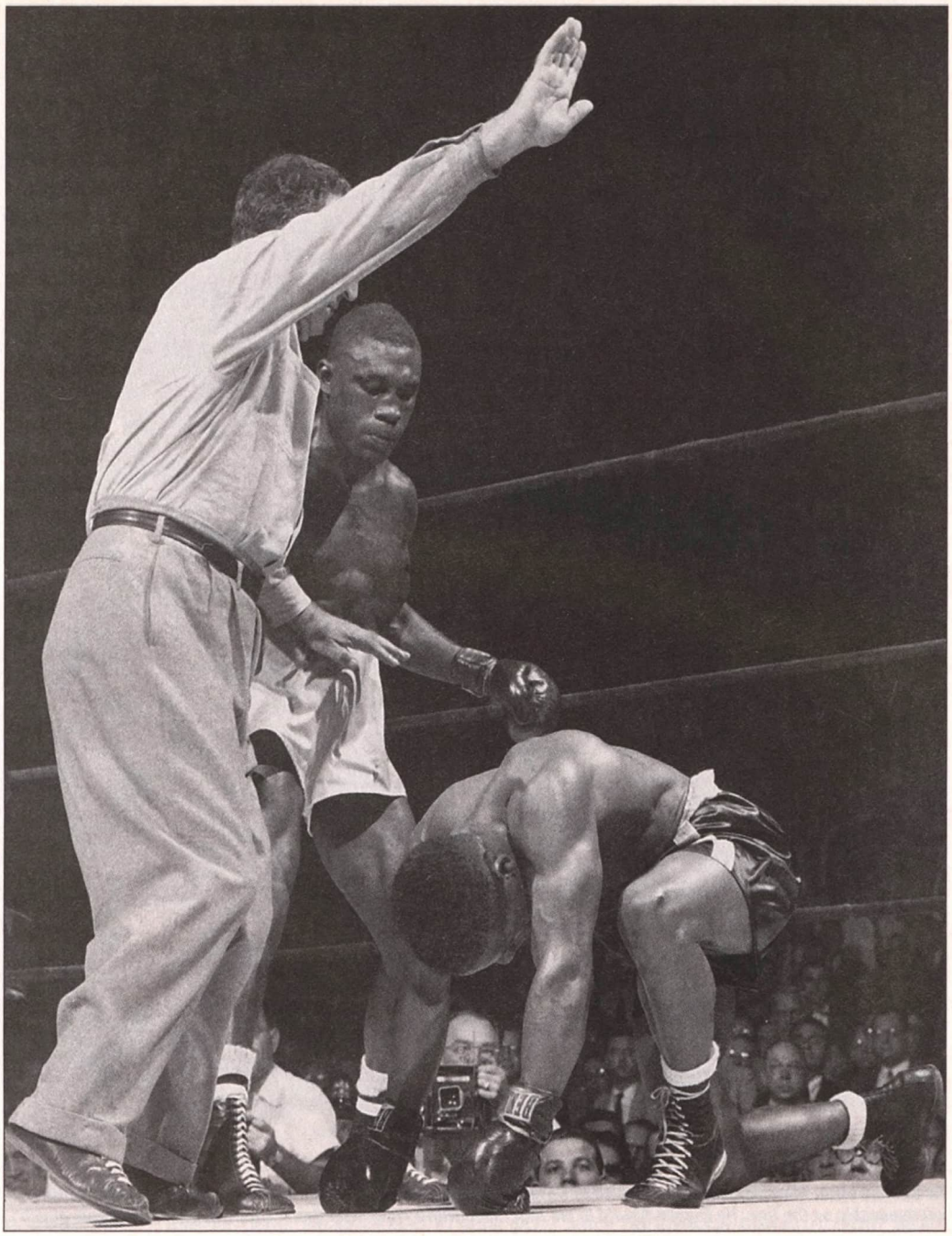
After losing a non-title bout to Art Aragon, Cater floored the original "Golden Boy" three times in a rematch and won a 15-round decision. When the title was on the line, Carter seemed like a different fighter.

ring as Carter. George Araujo was another matter. The 22-year-old Providence, Rhode Island, fighter had lost just two of 52 bouts, with 30 knockouts, when he went after Carter's title at Madison Square Garden on June 12, 1953.

Araujo was the 8-5 favorite, but Carter did a workmanlike job of dismantling him in 13 rounds. Though Joseph Nichols of *The New York Times* grumped that he "did not resemble any of the ring greats who once held the 135-pound crown," it was Carter's most satisfying win.

"Despite the Collins fight, I was still regarded as a sort of cheese champion," he recalled in a 1965 interview. "It wasn't till I knocked out Araujo that I won everyone's respect. I'll never forget that night in the Garden. People stood up after the fight and gave me a 10-minute ovation."

Nobody applauded after his next outing, when Carter lost a 10-round non-title decision to Johnny Cunningham, whose record was 8-26-4.



In perhaps his most satisfying victories, Carter stopped highly regarded challenger George Araujo in the 13th round at Madison Square Garden. Araujo had been a slight favorite to take the title, but was flattened by a vicious left-right combination. In his next fight, however, Carter lost a non-title bout to Johnny Cunningham.

"A fighter who can lose to a garbage collector who has boxed more trash than opponents, as Carter did against a nondescript character named Johnny Cunningham, and then whale the stuffing out of the best men in his division, is something more than erratic," wrote Dan Parker, who dubbed Carter "the Carbo-Ketchum chameleon."

According to Jesse Abramson of the *New York Herald*, Carter was, at best, "a Jekyll and Hyde sort of fellow" who "doesn't care who beats him in non-title bouts" but "becomes mean and destructive when his title is up for grabs."

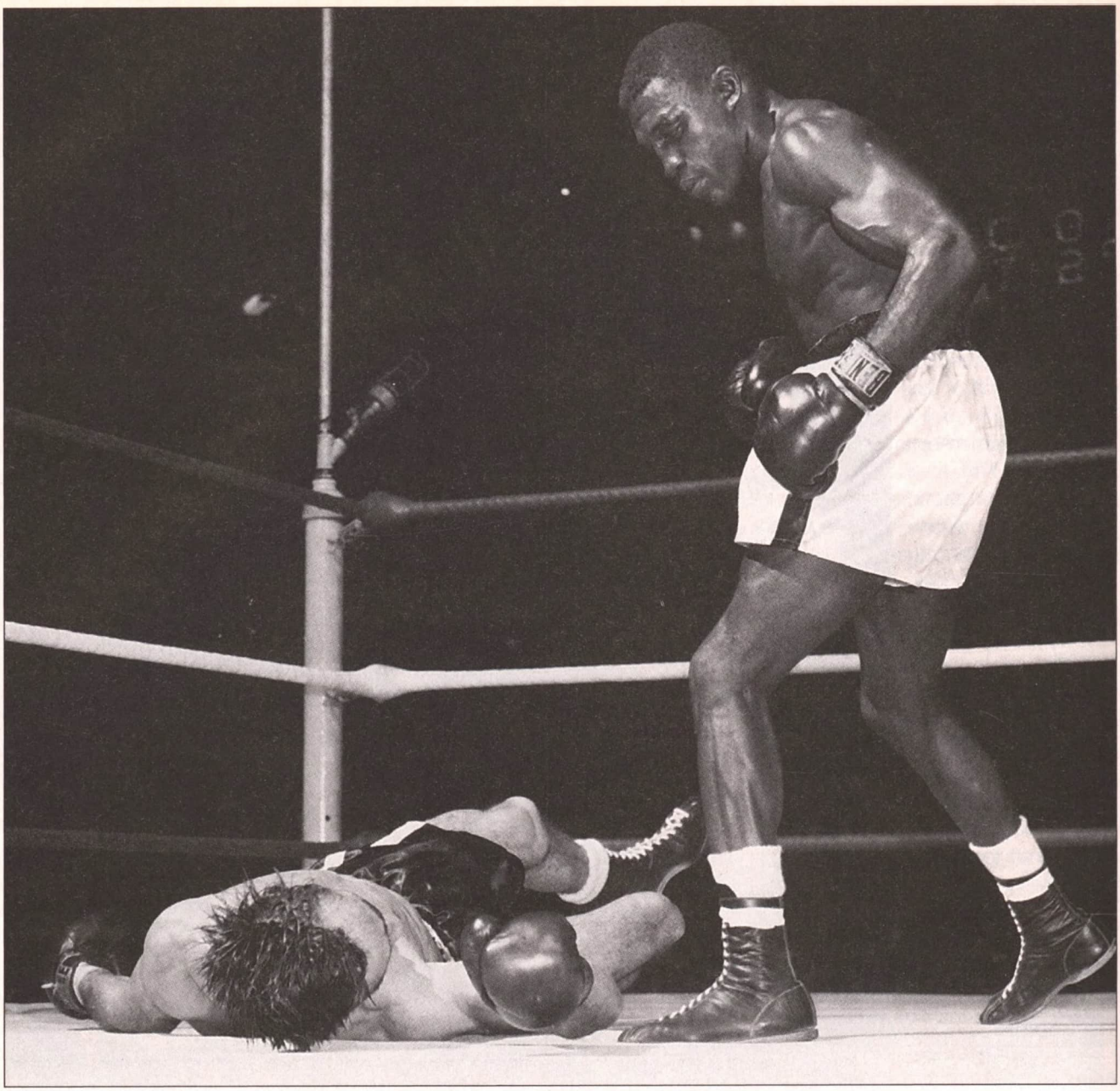
For a fellow considered to be fairly articulate, the champion himself was strangely laconic concerning his up-and-down performances. "Fighters have good days and bad days," was all he said.

Manager Ketchum was slightly more expansive. "He only fights good when he feels good," he said.

In a November 10, 1953, rematch with Savoie for the title, Carter felt good, knocking out the Canadian in round five with what he called "the best single punch I ever threw."

It impressed Al Buck enough to write in THE RING, "There is a growing belief that Carter is a much better fighter than he has been given credit for being."

But the consistently inconsistent champion wasted little time nipping that kind of talk in the bud. He blew the title in his next defense to 5-2 underdog Paddy DeMarco. The new champion was crowned unanimously to loud applause



As was his wont, after losing a non-title bout to Canadian lightweight champ Armand Savoie, Carter seemed a different fighter when they met with the championship on the line. He kayoed Savoie in the fifth round with a right hand Carter said was the "best single punch" he ever threw.

from the 7,000 fans at the Garden.

Naturally there was a rematch, and if you can't guess what happened, you haven't been paying attention. The November 17, 1954, fight in San Francisco ended with Carter, in command all the way, stopping DeMarco in the 15th to become the first triple lightweight champion.

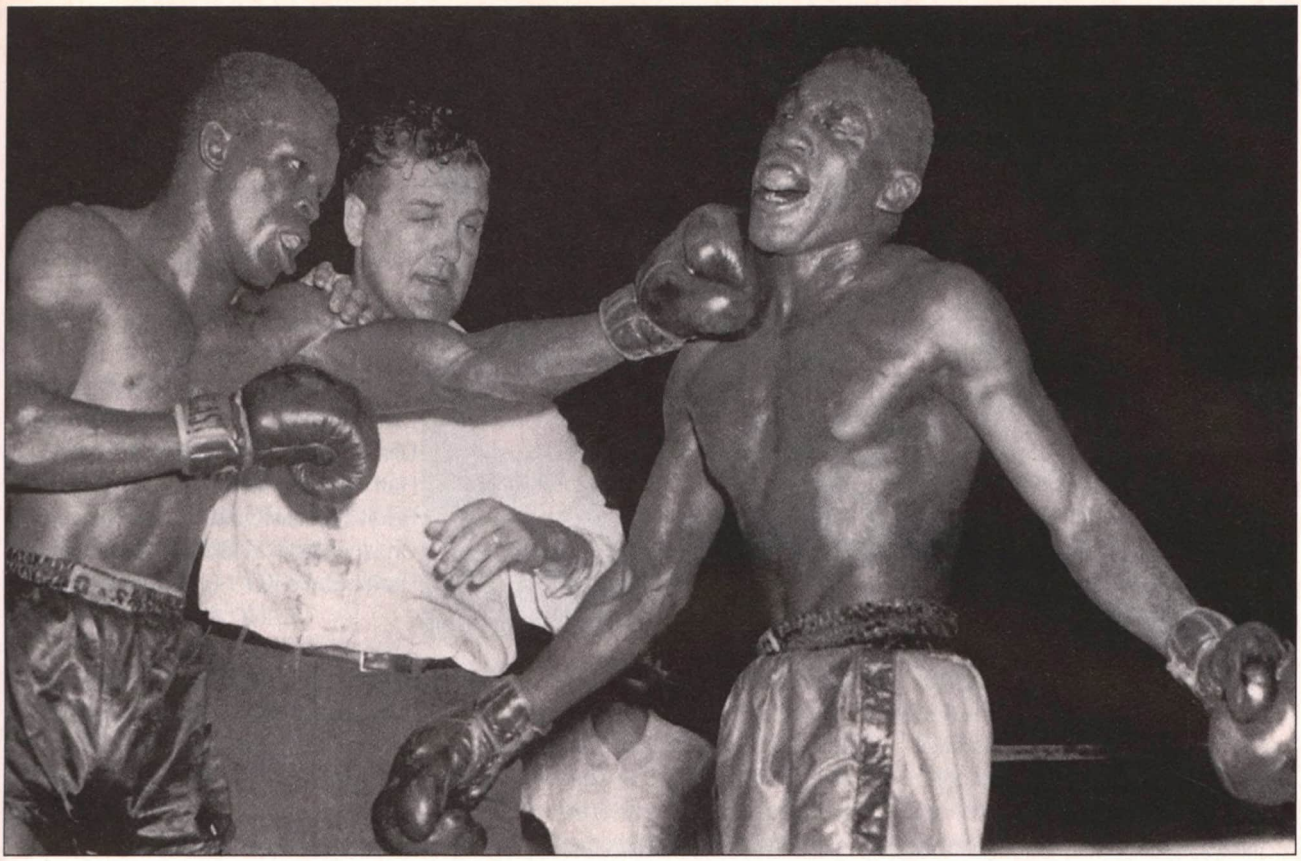
Carter's 11th title bout, seven months and three non-title fights (in which he went 1-1-1) later, was against Wallace "Bud" Smith. Five years earlier, Carter had trounced Smith in Cincinnati, Smith's hometown. And in the previous year, Smith had lost half of his six fights. Sportswriter Caswell Adams wrote that he "has a much right to challenge for the lightweight championship as Carter has to challenge the wisdom of the atomic bomb."

Bill Corum wrote that "Smith doesn't belong in the same arena, much less the same ring, as Carter," and the negativity evidently was contagious because the challenger himself confessed, "I'm hoping to win, but I'm not thinking I will."

So, of course, he did, taking the title on a split decision before only 1,983 at Boston Garden.

Implacable Carter/Ketchum/Carbo detractors held their noses again. "Jimmy Carter has now won and lost the lightweight championship three times, thus gaining permanent possession of the most skeptical following a fighter had," wrote Dan Parker, who also boldly stated that Frankie Carbo "gives Jimmy his instructions before each fight."

Carter's habit of "losing listlessly and winning back his title with savage decisiveness and efficiency a few months later," wrote Sid Ziff of the *Los Angeles Mirror*, "amounts to little more than a hoax against the public. If a horse raced



Wallace "Bud" Smith lands a left to Carter's chin a fraction of a second after the bell sounded to end the final round of their June 1955 in which Smith won the title. Carter also lost the rematch in a fight that turned out to be his final title bout. Nevertheless, he kept fighting until 1960.

as inconsistently as Carter fights, he would be suspended permanently."

Others, however, defended Carter's performance against Smith.

"Of course, as in almost every bout in which Carter has engaged since he gained the top rung of the ladder, the fans raised eyebrows at the turn of affairs in this match," wrote editor Nat Fleischer in THE RING. "But there was no reason for any doubt. The boys engaged in an honest-to-goodness battle, with Carter, particularly, giving all he possessed in an effort to save his crown."

Sportswriter Jim Jennings argued that Carter "took too much punishment—he needed 15 stitches after the bout—to make the excellent brawl seem dubious."

By the time the inevitable rematch rolled around on October 19, however, Jennings had apparently changed his mind, calling the fight in Cincinnati "boxing's version of the old shell game" and predicting a Carter win "unless 'Uncle' Frankie Carbo orders otherwise."

It was a weird one, for sure. Most ringside reporters called it for Carter at the end of 15 rounds, but the official decision went to Smith. It was first announced as a majority vote, with one judge scoring it a draw. Then it was changed to a split decision, and still later that night it somehow became unanimous. One judge, the aptly named Joe Blink, kept insisting that he'd voted for Carter by 144-140, even though his scorecard added up to a 143-139 tally for Smith.

After 100 pro fights, Jimmy Carter was finally out of the lightweight title picture for good. He continued to fight, but by 1958 was so shopworn that the California commission put the 34-year-old boxer on its "permanently retired and unavailable" list.

But nothing about Carter was ever set in stone, and within two months he was fighting again. For one thing, the man who had said that "in this game you have to save all you can while you can make it," was totally broke.

In his final bout in 1960, Carter got $500 for losing to unheralded Luis Garduno in Mesa, Arizona. His final record was 81-31-9 (32) and he was posthumously inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2000.

What was as impressive about Carter as anything he did in the ring was his refusal to expect anybody to feel sorry for him. In 1965, after he'd worked as a steelworker, parking lot attendant, and car salesman, he told Melvin Durslag of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "I'm no tragic case. I was never cheated out of my money. I got my check after every fight and I put it in the bank. A bank, I found out, can be a very dangerous place for your cash because it's so easy to reach. All you do is fill out a little slip of paper and they give it to you."

In the September 21, 1994, edition of *The New York Times*, a front-page headline announced, "Carter feels unappreciated." It was about the second famous Jimmy Carter, still lusting after the approbation he never got as President. The other Jimmy Carter died that same day, at age 70, and *The Times* didn't even run an obit. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer and historian, based in West Allis, Wisconsin.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Sultan Ibragimov W 12
Shannon Briggs
James Toney W 10
Danny Batchelder
Chris Henry W 10 Rafael Pedro
Calvin Brock W 8 Alex Gonzales
Andrew Golota KO 2 Jeremy Bates
Alonzo Butler KO 1 Ralph West
Chauncy Welliver KO 6
Corey Williams
Raphael Zumbano KO 8
Egidio Amaro Da Costa
Art Binkowski KO 7 Toto Mubenga
Chauncy Welliver KO 6
Corey Williams
Mario Preskar KO 4 Carl Gathright
Michael Pechey KO 3
Greg Tomlinson
Alexander Povetkin KO 2
Patrice L'Heureux
Alonzo Butler KO 1 Ralph West
Shane Andreesen KO 1
Jose Beltran
Faruq Saleem KO 1
Wallace McDaniel
Shane Andreesen KO 1 Jose Beltran
Kevin Johnson W 8 Ron Guerrero
Dave Brunelli W 6 Arron Lyons

Cruiserweights

Steve Cunningham W 12
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk
(*Wins IBF Title*)
Marco Huck W 12 Vadim Tokarev
Goran Delic W 12 Ivica Cukusic
Rene Huebner Tech. Win 11
Denis Solomko
Dominic Vea KO 8
Ryosuke Takahashi
Robert Stieglitz W 8 Marlon Hayes
Rob Calloway KO 3 Chris Thomas

Light Heavyweights

Chad Dawson KO 6 Jesus Ruiz
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Antonio Tarver W 12 Elvir Muriqi
Tomasz Adamek KO 7
Luis Andres Pineda
Jason Naugler W 10 David Whittom
Luzimar Gonzaga W 10
Manuel de Souza
Dean Francis KO 9 Ayitey Powers

Super Middleweights

Jean Pascal KO 10 Christian Cruz
Cristian Sanavia W 12 David Gogiya
Piotr Wilczewski W 12 Djamel Selini
Alexis Callero W 10 Oscar Lopez
Dmitri Sukhotskiy KO 7 Yuri Tsarenko
Ibole Issaka KO 7 Marciano Commey
Giovanni Lorenzo KO 3
Bruce Rumbolz
Stephen Johnson KO 1 Bryan Dailey

Middleweights

Arthur Abraham KO 3
Sebastien Demers
(Retains IBF Title)
Daniel Adjei D 12 Kojo Issah
Geard Ajetovic W 10 Robert Roselia
In Young Yoon KO 3 Jong Bae Lee

Junior Middleweights

Kuvanych Toygonbayev W 12
Hassan Matumla
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 3
Grover Wiley
Yuri Foreman W 10
Anthony Thompson
James Kirkland W 10 Ossie Duran
Damian Jonak W 10 Michael Schubov
Ulises Lopez W 10 Claudio Ariel
Harry Yorgey W 8 Edson Aguirre
Rafal Jackiewicz KO 6 Joel Mayo
Christy Martin W 6 Amy Yuratovac
Derek Ennis KO 1 Mike McGuire

Welterweights

Miguel Cotto KO 11 Zab Judah
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Jackson Osei Bonsu KO 12
Cristian De Martinis
Yuriy Nuzhnenko W 12 Juan Villarreal
Slawomir Ziemlewicz W 10
Karl David
Freddy Hernandez W 10 Ben Tackie
Shamone Alvarez W 12
Jose Luis Cruz
Kobe Vandekerkhove W 10
Carlos Schram
Idiozan Matos W 10 Jorge Falcao

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

Junior middleweight James Kirkland rams a right into Ossie Duran

Jesus Soto Karass D 12
Gilbert Venegas
Daisuke Hata D 10
Bernung Sakhomsil
Ushiwakamaru Akibei KO 2
Jack Macan
Nadeem Siddique KO 4
Tye Williams
Anderson Clayton KO 3
Oscar Samudio
Ivan Kirpa KO 2 Jose Corona
Ryuichi Kuwana KO 2
Hironobu Futami

Junior Welterweights

Herman Ngoudjo W 12
Randall Bailey
Carlos Vilches Tech. Win 11
Juan Godoy
Stuart Phillips W 10 Ceri Hall
Lamont Peterson KO 8
John Brown
Dean Byrne W 10 Brad Crookey
Joji Osaki W 10
Singtothong Fulightgym
Timothy Bradley W 10
Donald Camarena
Shunsuke Ito KO 6 Koji Iida
Takehiro Shimada KO 5
Ramuna Purba
Lucas Matthysse KO 4 Ariel Burgos
Holly Holm W 10 Chevelle Hallback

Lightweights

Yuri Romanov KO 3
Tontcho Tontchev
Ranee Ganoy W 12 Joey De Ricardo
Cesar Soriano W 12 Julio Gamez
Irvin Buhlalu W 12 Khululekile Sibeko
Juan Melero W 12
Jean Nicolas Weigel
Vicente Rodriguez W 12
Gaston Sellan
Lee McAllister W 10 Ben Odamattey
Edner Cherry W 10 Wes Ferguson
Anthony Peterson KO 9
Luis Ernesto Jose
Hirohito Fukuhara D 8 Akihito Nishio
Ameth Diaz KO 5 Samir Torres
Hideaki Ura KO 3 Kozo Kikuchi
Antonio de Marco KO 3 Jair Aguiar
Nick Casal W 8 Priest Smalls

Junior Lightweights

Humberto Soto KO 7 Bobby Pacquiao
Daniel Jimenez W 10 Angel Chacon

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Junior lightweight Humberto Soto jolts Bobby Pacquiao with a left

Hiroshi Katayama W 10
Weerachai Chuwatana
Eugenio Lopez W Disq. 7
Arturo Herrera
Yasuki Takemoto Tech. Win 6
Akinori Kanai

Featherweights

Manuel Gomes W 12
Bogdan Condurache
Marcos Ramirez W 12
Adailton De Jesus
Anselmo Moreno W 10 Tomas Rojas
Clarence Adams W 10 David Martinez
Terdsak Jandaeng KO 1
Yamato Mitsuboshi
Noriyuki Ueno W 10 Motokazu Abe
Michael Correa KO 6 Il Woo Song
Osumanu Akaba KO 4
Theodore Lokosso

Junior Featherweights

Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 4
Kanghuyak Kansorik
Wisanu Pornobnum W 12
Ricky Manufoe
Ricardo Cordoba W 8
Hevinson Herrera
Rachamongkol Sor Pleonchit W 12
Thitichon Singwancha
Wethya Sakmuangklang W 12
Kyohei Tamakoshi
Kohei Ohba W 10 Francisco Paredes
Jose Arboleda W 10
Guadalupe Hernandez
Kazuyoshi Niki KO 4
Petchpupan Sithprakaifah

Bantamweights

Alex Baba W 12 Jose Laureano
Bandung Patavikorngym W 10
Denna Moechtar
Yosuke Takeuchi KO 2
Kunihiro Kinoshita

Junior Bantamweights

Yo Sam Choi KO 9 Kenichi Onishi
Chatchai Sasakul W 6
Masanori Murata

Flyweights

Koki Kameda KO 8 Irfan Ogah
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym W 10
Hiroyuki Hisataka

Junior Flyweights

Giovanni Segura KO 1 Daniel Reyes
Muvhuso Nedzanani W 12
Jose Jimenez
Andrea Sarritzu D 12 Bernard Inom
Edwin Diaz W 8 Juan Landaeta
Kompayak Porpramook KO 2
Edo Resilay

Strawweights

Eagle Kyowa W 12 Akira Yaegashi
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym W 10
Danny Boy Sahuleka
Ganigan Lopez KO 4
Antonio Garibay

Jermain Taylor W 12 Cory Spinks

Memphis, Tennessee: Some boxing observers jokingly called middleweight champ Taylor "the junior middleweight champion of the world" heading into his fourth defense, noting that Spinks represented his third challenger in a row moving up from the 154-pound division. By the time this fight at the FedExForum was over, however, many people were hesitant to call Taylor "champ" at all, as he turned in a thoroughly disappointing performance in winning a dreadfully boring split decision in which he allowed his defensive-minded opponent to dictate the terms.

A second choice after ideal challenger Sergio Mora balked at fighting in Memphis, Spinks, 160, St. Louis, Missouri, made the fight as uneventful as possible, which was just what he needed to do to have a chance. Circling the ring in his southpaw stance, Spinks' movement caused Taylor, 160, Little Rock, Arkansas, to hesitate to throw, allowing "The Next Generation" to edge the first couple of rounds merely by opening up with occasional ineffective flurries. In the third round, Taylor, 28, began to let his hands go, throwing occasional one-twos, and Spinks did nothing in response, illustrating how easily Taylor could handcuff his opponent. It was not a lesson that Taylor absorbed, however.

With Taylor inactive throughout the fourth, a "Cory! Cory!" chant arose from the crowd. In the fifth, a rally in the final 20 seconds by Taylor stole the uneventful round for the champion, and he carried the momentum over into the sixth, scoring with a few right crosses and one particularly nice right uppercut. Spinks, 29, was outworking Taylor (not too hard to do), but one or two clean punches per round from the harder hitter were often enough to earn the champion a point, and he appeared to shade rounds seven and eight doing exactly that.

Over the first two minutes of the ninth, Taylor barely threw a punch, unable to get set as Spinks used his legs. But "Bad Intentions" scored with a nice right uppercut in the final minute—only to be countered by a crisp counter left from Spinks. It was a rare moment of excitement, overshadowed by rounds like the 10th, in which neither fighter offered up a single noteworthy punch in the entire three minutes.

Heading into the 11th, an exasperated and nervous Emanuel Steward yelled to Taylor, "Just get out and fight!" Taylor did nothing of the sort, though a few good jabs early may have won him the round. Heading into the 12th, the trainer was even more colorfully expressive: "I don't give a f___ whether you land or not, just let 'em go!" Taylor, 27-0-1 (17), didn't heed the advice, but he was helped by a disgustingly defensive Spinks, 36-4 (11), who ducked, ran, and held all round long, landing only four punches of the paltry 25 he threw in the stanza, according to CompuBox.

The judges were all over the map in a difficult-to-score bout. Dick Flaherty (USA) had Spinks on top 117-111, while Gale Van Hoy (USA) had the same score in Taylor's favor. Michael Pernick (USA) broke the tie with a score of 115-113 for Taylor. THE RING had Taylor ahead 116-113.

The referee was Michael Ortega (USA).

Promoters: **DiBella Entertainment, Don King Productions**

Television: **HBO**

(5-19-07)

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Taylor and Spinks play patty-cake

Andre Berto KO 7 Martinus Clay

Memphis, Tennessee: After two consecutive impressive wins on HBO, welterweight prospect Berto got an easy assignment on the untelevised portion of the Taylor-Spinks undercard at the FedExForum and succeeded in both getting in some rounds and dishing out a beating. Sub-.500 trialhorse Clay, who had gone his last 23 fights without putting together so much as a two-bout winning streak, didn't belong in the same ring as the 2004 Olympian, and he absorbed severe punishment as a result, before understandably surrendering in the seventh round.

Over the first three rounds, Berto, 146, Winter Haven, Florida, fought at a measured pace, content to let Clay, 147, Wilson, North Carolina, keep some distance with his jab while Berto unloaded occasional powershots. In the fourth, however, Berto, 23, transitioned the fight from a paid sparring session to a violent beatdown. He started opening up with combinations to the head and body, and Clay, despite showing a fine ability to take a shot, was obviously having his will whittled away. A fast and potent left hand to the midsection dropped Clay, 25, in the sixth round, but he got up and survived to hear the bell.

With four scheduled rounds to go, there was discussion in the Clay corner over whether to stop the one-sided fight, but ultimately, the journeyman was sent out for another round. Berto was unrelenting, and after a series of headshots landed, Clay, 12-15-2 (4), turned his back on his opponent and waved his hand in the air, indicating that he'd had enough. The official time of the stoppage was 2:15 of the seventh round.

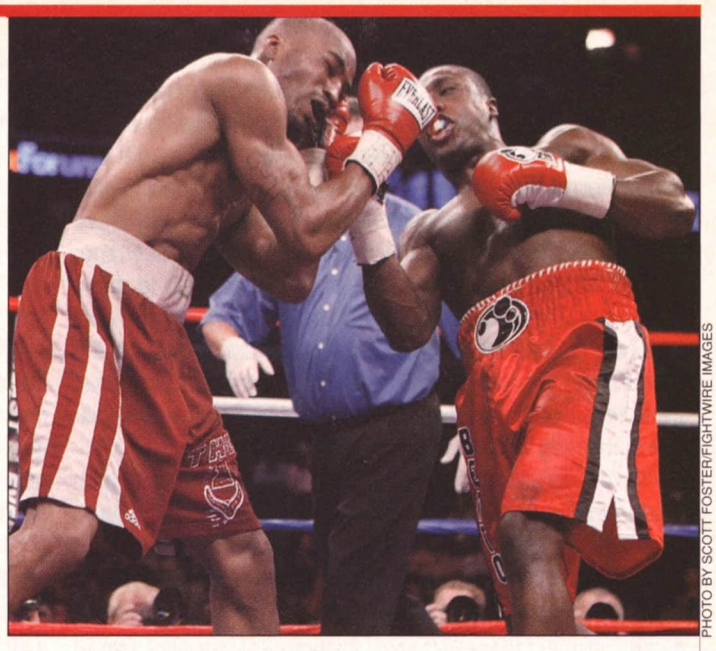


PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Berto splits Clay's guard with an uppercut

Berto, 18-0 (16), will next move on to the toughest test of his career so far, a July 27 bout with veteran Cosme Rivera. Considering Rivera lost a razor-thin decision to touted prospect Joel Julio last year, this fight will provide a real sense of where Berto stands in comparison to the rest of the young welterweights.

Promoter: **DiBella Entertainment**
(5-19-07)

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Kelly Pavlik

The days of automatically betting against the white guy from middle America are over. At first glance, Kelly Pavlik may look like the classic tomato can, with his pale skin and gawky physique. But as flame-throwing tough guy Edison Miranda learned the hard way in May, Pavlik is no tomato can, and what's more, he can make world-class fighters look like *they're* tomato cans.

After having drubbed a few fringe contenders, Pavlik stepped up to fight his first even-money-or-better foe in Miranda, and showed several gears he hadn't previously needed to reveal. Whether using his 6'2" middleweight frame to punch from a distance or stepping inside and slugging away, Pavlik was too much for the Colombian, scoring two knockdowns in the sixth round and forcing the stoppage with a third knockdown in the seventh. Miranda's only previous defeat had come on a highly controversial decision to the excellent Arthur Abraham, so for Pavlik to so thoroughly dominate "Pantera" was a serious notice of arrival.

Juxtaposed against middleweight champ Jermain Taylor's disappointing win over Cory Spinks on the same card, Pavlik's performance looks like one for the ages. But even without the benefit of that flattering comparison, it was easily the best performance of the month.

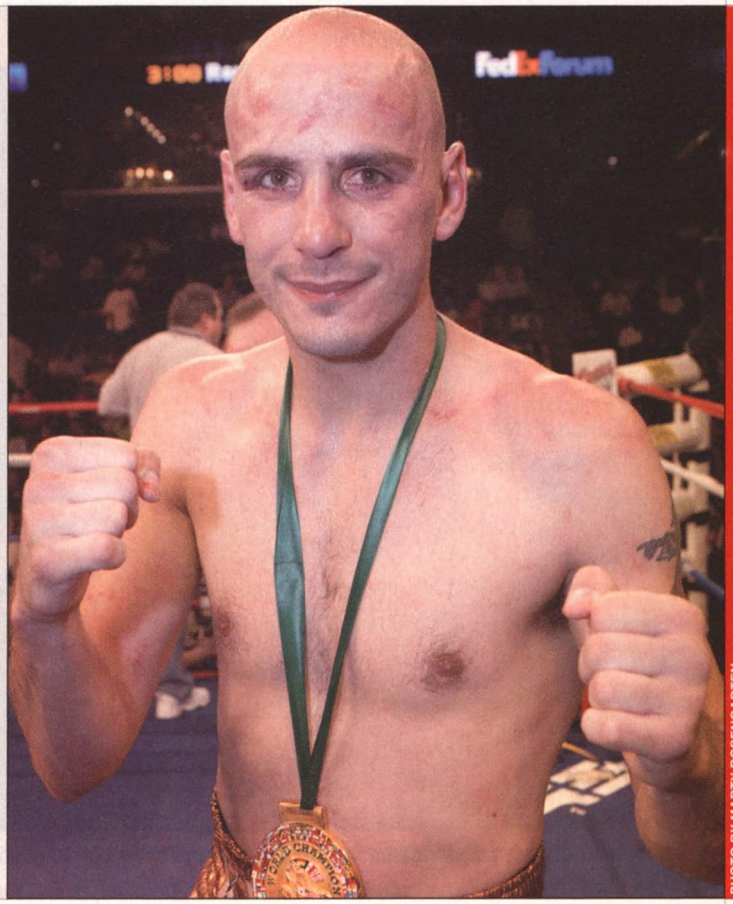


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Steve Cunningham W 12 Krzysztof Wlodarczyk

Katowice, Poland: Having felt cheated by being on the wrong end of a split points decision when they fought last November for the vacant IBF cruiserweight title, Cunningham, 194, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was determined to leave nothing to chance against Wlodarczyk, 196, Piaseczno, Poland, in the rematch. His goal, he declared, was to dominate, work Wlodarczyk's body, and "make him quit." That goal was not quite achieved. But Cunningham did end up on the right side of a majority points decision in front of a vociferous partisan crowd at the Spodek Arena, and had a new appreciation of the Pole when the fight was finished.

"He's tough, he can fight, and he can punch," Cunningham said in tribute to his beaten rival. "You've got to be tough to beat him."

It was another challenging 12-rounder for the 30-year-old Philadelphian, whose loud protestations in the wake of his first encounter with Wlodarczyk gave a decidedly one-sided view of what had been far from a one-sided fight in his favor. That bout had been close and the rematch was close too, with Wlodarczyk emerging from a lethargic start to rally in the middle rounds, though he left himself with too much to do.

Former Navy midshipman "USS" Cunningham began aggressively, moving back the Pole with hard combinations, though the 25-year-old Wlodarczyk, 37-2 (27), covered up well and did not get into real trouble until round four, when Cunningham ended another strong combination with a jab that put him down. Wlodarczyk was up before referee Dave Parris (England) completed the eight-count, and over the following rounds, he rallied, countering intuitively with well-timed, accurate shots to Cunningham's head. The American always maintained an edge, but was made to dig deep by his opponent, and in the closing two rounds, they fought furiously to try to sway the judges.

Bob Gibson (New Zealand) could not separate them, scoring it 114-114, but Alejandro Lopez (Mexico) and Somsak Sirianantof (Thailand) both scored for Cunningham, 116-112 and 115-112, respectively. THE RING scored 115-112 for Cunningham, who immediately made known his desire to challenge France's Jean-Marc Mormeck, THE RING cruiserweight champion. "If we've got to go to France for that, so be it," Cunningham, 20-1 (10), declared. "I backed myself to come back here and win and it's an awesome feeling to have done just that."

Promoter: **Hammer Knockout Promotions**

(5-26-07)

Brian Doogan

Sultan Ibragimov W 12 Shannon Briggs

Atlantic City, New Jersey: The common cliché regarding decisions in title fights is that the challenger has to take the title from the beltholder. On rare occasions, though, the challenger can be lucky enough to have the beltholder hand the title to him.

In front of a mostly pro-Ibragimov crowd of 5,132 at Boardwalk Hall, WBO heavyweight titlist Briggs didn't show the slightest inkling of desire in his first defense, exhausting himself just by lugging his muscular mass around the ring and making it so that Ibragimov only needed to give a half-decent performance to win. The undefeated Russian did exactly that, capturing an easy 12-round decision.

Just seconds into the bout, Briggs, 273, Brooklyn, New York, threw a wild overhand right that missed the mark. Midway through the round, he connected with two right hands, the second one momentarily shaking up Ibragimov, 221, Rostov-na-Donu, Russia. It was clearly Briggs' round. And it would prove to be the last round he'd win on THE RING'S scorecard.

In the second round, the southpaw Ibragimov began to implement trainer Jeff Mayweather's plan—moving, getting in

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ibragimov handles Briggs with ease

and out, landing with straight left hands, and never allowing Briggs' bulk to be anything but a hindrance to the Brooklyn veteran. By the third, Briggs, 35, was breathing hard, and the crowd was beginning a "Sul-tan! Sul-tan!" chant in recognition of the one man throwing punches. By the end of the round, however, the only noise coming from the audience was booing, as there were entirely too many stretches in which both heavyweights just stared at each other and feinted.

Briggs had a good moment or two in the fourth, landing one counter left hook in particular, but for the most part, he was doing nothing to capitalize on the fact that Ibragimov, 32, was circling to his left, the wrong way for a southpaw. The Russian did some excellent work with the left hand in the fifth, scoring with quick shots to both the body and head, and Briggs laughed as he headed to his corner at round's end, odd timing considering he'd just had his worst round of the fight.

And so it continued, Briggs pushing out a few punches per round, Ibragimov outworking him easily and answering most of Briggs' landed shots with retaliations that canceled them right out. Ibragimov dominated round nine, knocking Briggs off-balance at one point and opening up against an opponent who simply had no answers. The most exciting moment of the bout came in the 10th, when the fighters traded a series of power-shots and then a body-bump led to Briggs falling flat on his back. Referee Eddie Cotton (USA) correctly ruled it a slip.

In the so-called "championship rounds," when Briggs clearly needed the sort of miracle he'd managed in his previous fight against Sergei Liakhovich, he instead just continued with six more minutes of sleepwalking. Even though Ibragimov went into run-out-the-clock defensive mode, it was hard to find an excuse to give Briggs the rounds. But that didn't stop Briggs, 48-5-1 (42), from raising his arms at the bell.

Just Lynne Carter (USA) had it 119-109 for Ibragimov, the same as THE RING, while Don Trella (USA) had it 117-111. Luis Rivera's (USA) card of 115-113 in Ibragimov's favor was a joke, as he gave each of the first three rounds to Briggs, apparently requiring a full nine minutes to realize what he was watching. Nevertheless, it correctly goes into the books as a unanimous decision for Ibragimov, 21-0-1 (17).

"For two weeks, I couldn't train," insisted Briggs, launching into his usual litany of excuses. "I had been taking all kinds of antibiotics. I didn't want to fight. They made me fight. If I pulled out, they would have sued me and they would have stripped me anyway."

"Shannon Briggs is a very tough guy and I had to be really careful," said Ibragimov, showing much more respect for the man he'd just beaten than Briggs did for him. Next for Ibragimov will probably be a fight in Russia. Names such as Evander Holyfield and Calvin Brock are being mentioned as possible opponents.

Promoters: **Seminole Warriors Boxing, Golden Boy Promotions, Main Events, Caesars**
Television: **Pay-Per-View**
(6-2-07)
Eric Raskin

Calvin Brock W 8 Alex Gonzales

Atlantic City, New Jersey: It's not often that a top-10-ish heavyweight contender two fights removed from a title challenge appears in a walkout bout, but since Brock had to be kept at the ready as an insurance policy in case Shannon Briggs failed to show for his fight against Sultan Ibragimov in the main event at Boardwalk Hall, "The Boxing Banker" ended up performing for just a couple hundred stragglers following the WBO title fight. It's probably just as well that there were few fans and no TV cameras, because Brock had some rust to shake off against the game trialhorse Gonzales, looking less than spectacular in winning a unanimous decision.

The southpaw Gonzales, 236, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, was coming off a two-year layoff and had lost this last three in a row, all by knockout. But he refused to make it easy for Brock, 230, Charlotte, North Carolina. The one-time cruiserweight title challenger was quicker than Brock and scored with some nice left hands early, carrying the first round despite Brock making good use of his jab just before the bell. But 2000 U.S. Olympian Brock, 32, took control in the second, landing flush lefts and rights in the midst of a mostly successful 12-punch combination along the ropes.

Early in the third round, Brock hit the deck, though it was difficult to tell if any punch had sent him down. When ref Steve Smoger (USA) picked up the count, Brock immediately complained that it should have been ruled a slip, but there was no

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Brock had more trouble with Gonzales than expect

changing Smoger's mind. A motivated Brock dominated the rest of the round, scoring with enough hard lefts and rights to make it no worse than a 10-9 round in Gonzales' favor (even though two judges blindly went ahead and scored it 10-8).

Gonzales, 33, jumped on Brock at the start of the fourth round, momentarily making the heavily favored fighter's legs wobble with a right hook. But Brock came back with a thudding right hand and took charge, winning most of the exchanges in the entertaining round. By round's end, Gonzales appeared to be tiring. Brock seemed to lack snap on his punches, but he still landed enough of them in the fifth, sixth, and seventh, especially when Gonzales paused along the ropes, to pile up points. Gonzales, 18-5 (8), was keeping the rounds close, however, and did land an excellent left hand late in the eighth and final round.

Judges Robert Grasso (USA) and Barbara Perez (USA) both scored the fight 77-74 for Brock, while Pierre Benoist (USA) had it 79-74. THE RING had it 78-75 for Brock, 31-1 (23), who still appears to have a little way to go to return to the form he showed before his unsuccessful challenge of Wladimir Klitschko last November.

Promoters: **Seminole Warriors Boxing, Golden Boy Promotions, Main Events, Caesars**
(6-2-07)
Eric Raskin

Arthur Abraham KO 3 Sebastien Demers

Bamberg, Germany: Eight months after enduring a broken jaw in an unforgettable brawl against Colombian powerpuncher Edison Miranda, Abraham, 160, Berlin, Germany, via Yerevan, Armenia, enjoyed a more straightforward win over Demers, 159, Montreal, Quebec, stopping his outclassed challenger inside three one-sided rounds to retain the IBF middleweight title at the Jako-Arena.

No one should begrudge the 27-year-old Armenian an easy payday, for he went beyond the call of duty in his bout with Miranda, swallowing a liter of blood after his jaw was fractured first by a punch and later in the bout by a headbutt. The bleeding was so profuse that there was fear he had bitten right through his tongue. In the build-up to the fight against Demers, a previously unbeaten 27-year-old who had never before mixed in such company, it was even reported that Abraham's trainer, Ulli Wegner, and ringside doctor Walter Wagner could face police charges of "bodily harm by omission" for failing to stop his bout with Miranda, but common sense prevailed. Abraham insisted he was glad that they allowed him to continue and, after two titanium plates and 22 screws had been inserted into his jaw to aid the healing process, he was ready once again for battle.

Unfortunately, Demers was not so ready for Abraham, despite insisting beforehand that he would go after his opponent's jaw. Even though Abraham had to shake off ring rust and his timing was not quite there for the first couple of rounds, Demers, 20-1 (9), was unable to take advantage. Abraham missed many of his punches in a slow first round, but Demers remained passive in the second as the Armenian began to find his range. In the third, he was ready to finish the job.

Clinically, he moved in and removed whatever there was of Demers' enthusiasm with a series of hard combinations before a final salvo, punctuated by a powerful right hook to the jaw, put the Canadian on the canvas. Demers beat American referee Ernie Sharif's count but was in no state to continue, and the bout was waved over at 2:57 of round three.

"I didn't feel my jaw at any point and I didn't think about it," Abraham declared. "If I was going to injure it, it would have happened in sparring. My sparring was tougher than that."

Promoter Wilfried Sauerland claimed that he had made an offer for Abraham, 23-0 (18), to challenge THE RING middleweight champion Jermain Taylor, but there was no favorable response from the American's camp. A bout against Germany's Felix Sturm, the WBA middleweight titleholder, is also a possibility for Abraham.

Promoter: **Sauerland Promotions**
(5-26-07)
Brian Doogan

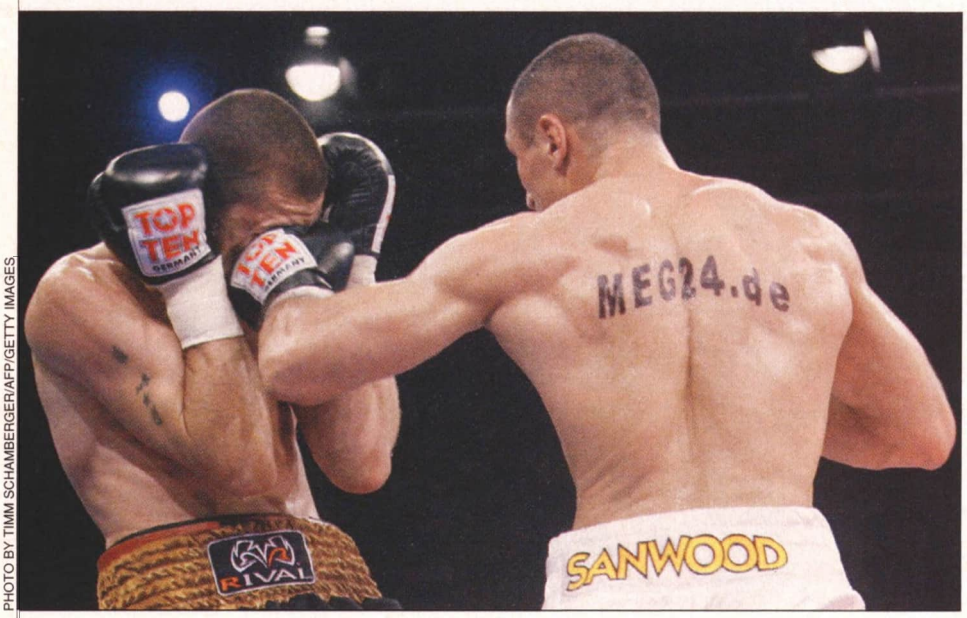


PHOTO BY TIMM SCHAMBERGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Abraham returns with an easy kayo of Demers

Marco Huck W 12 Vadim Tokarev

Bamberg, Germany: In a highly anticipated match featuring unbeaten cruiserweight contenders, Huck, 198½, Bielefeld, Germany, via Ugao, Sandzak, Yugoslavia, landed the more powerful, more telling blows against Tokarev, Los Angeles, California, via Ekaterinburg, Russia, to earn a majority points win at the Jako-Arena. The bout was an official eliminator for the IBF cruiserweight title, which

Steve Cunningham won in Poland on the same night.

Just 22 years old, Huck has time on his side to prove himself to be the future of his division, but he is a young man in a hurry. A former kickboxing champion, he has been well schooled by trainer Ulli Wegner and it was noticeable that he never went in wildly against Tokarev despite his clear edge in power. Instead, he went about his job intelligently against a fighter whose only blemish on his career was a draw against strong southpaw Firat Arslan, also in Germany. Tokarev had previously defeated former titleholder Arthur Williams as well as Darnell "Ding-A-Ling Man" Wilson before departing Russia and settling in Los Angeles. Last year he showed himself to be a formidable force in the division by coming through a bitterly fought four rounds to stop Felix Cora Jr., and there were many who believed that his toughness would be too much for Huck.

But from the first round, Huck, 19-0 (14), demonstrated the kind of confidence that could take him a long way, getting the measure of his adversary before launching a more concerted attack in the second round and showing that he would neither be bullied nor dictated to by his more experienced foe. In fact, Huck determined the terms of engagement, and if there was anything to warrant criticism of his performance it was perhaps that he could have been more aggressive, in which case Tokarev, 23-1-1 (16), may have struggled to last the course.

The America-based Russian was no lame duck opponent, however, for he took the fight to Huck and fired steadily to his head and body over the first half of the contest. It was from then on that Huck asserted himself in a more aggressive manner, though the infraction for which he was penalized a point by American referee Robert Byrd in the ninth round—when he drove his elbow into Tokarev's face—is a point he will hopefully learn from. Aggressiveness and illegal maneuvers are different matters entirely. For the most part, Huck stayed within bounds, firing jabs and right hands to the 35-year-old Tokarev's increasingly weary head during the final three rounds. Two of the judges saw the fight the same way, Raffaele Argiolas (Italy) and Alfred Asaro (France) both scoring 117-110, but Victor Loughlin (UK) made it 114-114. THE RING scored 116-113 for Huck, whose promoter, Wilfried Sauerland, hopes to secure him a title shot in Germany soon.

Promoter: **Sauerland Promotions**
(5-26-07)
Brian Doogan

Glen Johnson KO 11
Montell Griffin

Hollywood, Florida: Knocking out Roy Jones three years ago apparently didn't completely satisfy Johnson, so he put "beat everyone who's ever beaten Jones" on his to-do list, and completed that task with a late-round TKO win over "Ice" Griffin at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel. The bout, labeled an IBF light heavyweight title eliminator, was competitive for the first four rounds or so, but the stronger, harder-hitting, less-faded (despite being slightly older) Johnson took over after that and eventually convinced Griffin's brother and trainer, Tim Griffin, to stop the bout at 2:38 of the 11th.

Former 175-pound world champion Johnson, 173½, Miami, Florida, via Jamaica, clipped Griffin, 174¾, Chicago, Illinois, with a couple of nice right hands in the opening round, but the short and slippery Griffin was elusive and effective enough in the second and third rounds to arguably take an early lead on the cards. However, after a couple of rounds of struggling to find the range, Johnson, 38, finally zeroed in with a nice right to the jaw late in the fourth.

Johnson was putting it all together in the fifth, using his jab, his hook, and some nice bodywork, and his task only got easier after an errant elbow cut Griffin, 36, around the left eye. Thanks to the busy and effective jab of "The Road Warrior," the blood would flow steadily for the remainder of the fight.

From there, it was just a case of Johnson's steady attack wearing down Griffin, and there was nothing the underdog could do to hold off the Jamaican. Early in the ninth, Johnson drove Griffin into the ropes and scored with punishing combinations. The right hand to the shorter man's ear was particularly effective. In round 11, Johnson hurt Griffin to the body and caused him to double over and drop his gloves—creating a perfect opening for headshots. A five-punch salvo propelled Griffin, 48-7 (30), into the ropes, and as he wobbled toward his own corner, barely able to defend himself, his brother chose the perfect time to jump onto the ring apron, convincing ref Jorge Alonso (USA) to halt the affair.

Johnson, 45-11-2 (30), is now the mandatory for Clinton Woods, a man he has already beaten, lost to, and drawn with. This would be a rare case of a fourth fight being a rubber match, and since the first three all provided good action, it only makes sense.

Promoter: **Warriors Boxing**
Television: **ESPN2**
(5-16-07)

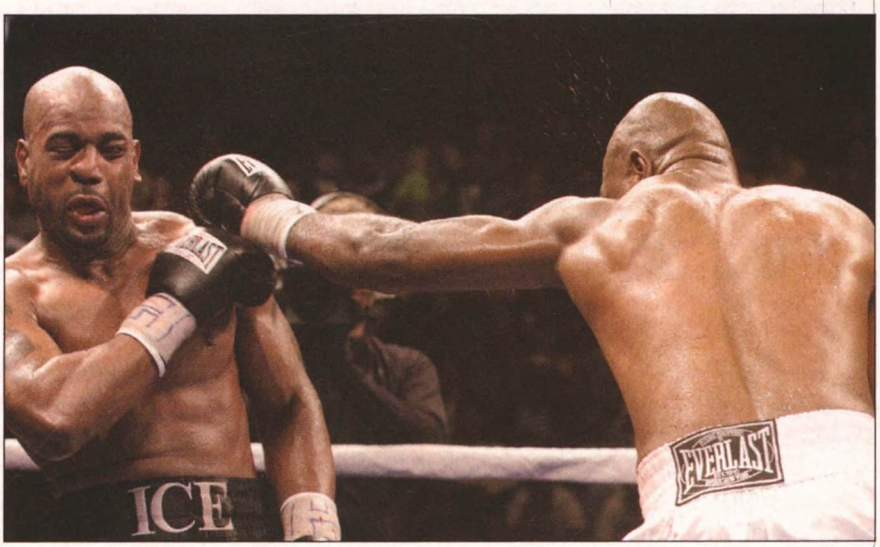


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Johnson knocks Griffin back with a left

Sergiy Dzinziruk KO 11 Carlos Nascimento

Hamburg, Germany: Vastly superior technique and experience gave Dzinziruk, 154, Hamburg, Germany, via St. Nizhnegorsk, Ukraine, the upper hand throughout, but the toughness and courage of Nascimento, 151½, Sao Paolo, Brazil, ensured that the bout remained intriguing. Repeatedly, he came through fast, accurate punches to his chin, but ultimately was unable to make it to the final bell. It was Dzinziruk's third defense of the WBO junior middleweight title that he won from Puerto Rican Daniel Santos in December 2005.

At six-feet tall, the 31-year-old Ukrainian southpaw enjoyed a height advantage of more than two inches and he made this count, constantly firing jolting right jabs into Nascimento's face. The brave Brazilian took them all, however, and stubbornly pursued his more talented adversary until the difference in class became too great for Nascimento to keep going, American referee Brian Garry intervening in the 11th round.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Dzinziruk slams Nascimento's body with a left

Nascimento, 28, made a positive start, firing off right hands to the head and body, and Dzinziruk fell to the canvas under the onslaught, though the referee ruled that he had slipped. Coolly, Dzinziruk went back to work, beginning the process of gradually breaking down Nascimento with pinpoint punches. In the third round, a series of shots to the head appeared to leave the Brazilian on the brink of being knocked over, but he dug in his heels and refused to fall. He even gained the respect of the crowd at the Color Line Arena in Dzinziruk's adopted hometown by continuing to come forward in an attempt to nail the undefeated titleholder with a hard punch.

In the seventh round, the challenger probably had his greatest success of the fight, penetrating Dzinziruk's guard with several right hands and reddening the left side of his face, but he remained in the ascendancy only briefly. The Ukrainian's intelligent movement and understanding of range meant that he dictated terms for almost all of the fight. When Nascimento, 16-1 (13), went down under a fusillade of punches in the 11th round, he managed to beat the count, but after a second knockdown, referee Garry waved it over at 1:42. The challenger had nothing to feel ashamed about, for he gave it his all and Dzinziruk, 34-0 (22), is an accomplished practitioner who will not likely fall against anything short of a top-flight opponent.

Promoter: **Universum Box**

(5-19-07)

Brian Doogan

Eagle Kyowa W 12 Akira Yaegashi

Yokohama, Japan: WBC 105-pound titlist Eagle, 105, Tokyo, Japan, via Pichit, Thailand, kept the belt as he swept almost every round, dropped inexperienced challenger Yaegashi, 104½, Yokohama, Japan, with a countering right in the 10th, and pounded out a lopsided decision over 12 rounds at the Pacifico. Judges Ray Hawkins (USA) and Nicolas Hidalgo (Venezuela) both scored it 119-107, while Jose de la Mora Delgado (Mexico) saw it 118-108, all for Eagle, who made his fourth successful defense of his second title reign. The referee was Jose Cobian (USA), who handled the fast-moving boys well.

The previously unbeaten Yaegashi, 6-1 (5), turned out to have suffered a fractured jaw in the second round, according to his manager/promoter (and former strawweight titlist) Hideyuki Ohashi. When Eagle connected with a well-timed right to the face in the 10th, flooring the game challenger, it worsened the injury, so Yaegashi had to fight on with an open mouth for the last two sessions.

Despite the broken jaw, and despite the fact that he only had six pro fights coming in, Yaegashi's performance was considered something of a disappointment. Eagle, 28, got off to a very good start as he almost toppled the 24-year-old challenger twice with solid overhand rights. In the second, Yaegashi showed his aggressiveness in pinning Eagle to the ropes with inaccurate combinations. The Japanese challenger sustained a slight gash over the left eyelid caused by an accidental butt, which cost the uncut beltholder a point due to the WBC's rules.

From the third round on, just about the only thing Yaegashi displayed was his footwork. Eagle applied pressure, and occasionally connected with effective left-right combos. Steadily piling up points, Eagle looked content to show his better balance and superior timing in sometimes mixing up toe-to-toe at close range.

In the eighth, Yaegashi stopped his footwork to swap

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Kyowa was too much for novice Yaegashi

punches with the cool and aggressive titlist, who proved superior whenever they mixed it up. Eagle was in command all night as he gradually realized that Yaegashi was an easier opponent than expected.

Eagle, 18-1 (6), will be obliged to face mandatory challenger Oleydong Sithsanerchai of Thailand in his next defense. He will most likely go back to his native country, Thailand, for that bout.

Yaegashi, meanwhile, needs more experience. There was no good reason to rush him into a title fight in his seventh pro bout. With 10 more bouts, Yaegashi could have given a better performance and might have acquired the belt. But this was just too early for the hard-hitting prospect. He tasted a bitter experience in losing a lopsided decision and suffering a fractured jaw.

Promoter: **Ohashi Promotions**
(6-4-07)
Joe Koizumi

James Toney W 10 Danny Batchelder

San Jose, California: What was originally a mundane split decision win for Toney became a scandal when both Toney and Batchelder tested positive for two types of steroids. According to Armando Garcia, the California commission's executive director, Toney tested positive for boldenone and stanazolol, while Batchelder tested positive for stanazolol and oxandolone. Both fighters have been fined a $2,500 and suspended for one year. The result, however was not changed to a no-contest as it would have been in other jurisdictions.

"The current rules in California do not call for a change in the result when a fighter tests positive for steroids," Garcia told THE RING. "We are working to change that, but the new rule will not be retroactive."

Originally, three-division former titleholder "Lights Out" Toney, 229, Sherman Oaks, California, had hoped to work his way back into the heavyweight fray, but the suspension could very well end his sputtering career. Even before the postfight drug tests results came back from the lab, Toney's bout against Batchelder, 222, Greenwich, New York, 30, at the HP Pavilion had not been impressive.

The 38-year-old Toney, who entered camp for this bout claiming his target weight would be 217 pounds (the same as he weighed for his best heavyweight performance, a ninth-round kayo of Evander Holyfield in October '03), weighed in 12 pounds above that mark, but still at his lightest weight in six fights.

The 4,269 fans at the Silicon Valley venue were primed to see a focused and fit Lights Out up close and personal, but were relegated to watching a somewhat lackluster performance that was more sparring exhibition than display of pugilistic prowess. Neither fighter particularly wanted to lead, but Toney reluctantly did and got hit by a surprising number of shots as he tried to move forward and make the fight. The jab of Batchelder, 25-5-1 (12), was particularly effective as Toney, a natural counterpuncher, was forced to fight in a manner that wasn't comfortable for him. Still, Toney did enough to win by scores of 98-92 and 97-93 on two cards, while the third judge had Batchelder up 96-94.

After the bout, in his crowded locker room jammed with media, family, and friends, Toney, 70-6-3 (43) with 1 no-contests, said of his performance, "I give myself a D! I'm not done, I just looked done." Toney admitted he was not in the shape he'd hoped be in, but the birth of his son, Jaden, days before the bout could have played a role in his lax camp. "I took the eating habits of my pregnant wife throughout camp. I guarantee before the end of the year I will be heavyweight champ again."

Less than a month later, that guarantee rung very hollow indeed.

Promoter: **Goossen-Tutor Promotions**
(5-24-07)
Steve Lenihan

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Toney and Batchelder both tested positive for steroids

John Duddy W 10 Dupre Strickland

New York, New York: When Duddy knocked Strickland down in the first round of their bout at the Beacon Theater, it looked like it was going to be a quick evening. His loyal Irish fans would've enjoyed seeing their man score a fast knockout in his last New York appearance before leaving for two summer bouts in Ireland. But Strickland, 160¼, Slidell, Louisiana, spent the next nine rounds in strict survival mode.

"It's hard to fight a guy who doesn't want to fight," said Duddy, who was awarded a unanimous decision by judges Luis Rivera (USA), Matt Rugerro (USA), and Bob Gilson (USA), each scoring it 100-89. "I'm disappointed in my performance. I wasn't professional at all and I had trouble cutting off the ring. But I'm happy to get the rounds in. If I'd knocked him out in the first round, you'd all be saying I fight nothing but bums. This way, I got some rounds in."

Duddy, 161½, Queens, New York, suffered a slight cut on his right eyebrow during the second round, inspiring the 37-year-old Strickland, 18-2-1 (7), to fight a wee bit, but by the fourth round the bout had fallen into a dull pattern of Duddy stalking, Strickland retreating, and the spectators politely cheering when Duddy, 20-0 (15), managed to land something.

Duddy, 27, nearly skipped the postfight chatter to get stitches, but he gave the handful of lingering beat writers a few minutes of his time. It was difficult to hear him—the cleaning crew made a lot of noise vacuuming the rivers of spilled beer—but most of his commentary involved his tentatively scheduled bout in Dublin's National Stadium. "The interest over there is at its peak so we have to do it now," he said. Duddy was emphatic about one particular point. "No matter how well the Ireland trip goes, for as long as I'm a fighter, New York is the place to be."

Word on the street, however, was that despite a very fine undercard, the Beacon Theater show didn't sell out the way promoter Irish Ropes had imagined it would; perhaps Duddy's followers still love him, but they'll no longer shell out $300 to see him chase down any old fighter.

Television: **MSG Network**
(5-18-07)
Don Stradley

Lamont Peterson KO 8 John Brown

Washington, D.C.: As the old Reese's Peanut Butter Cup jingle used to go, "You get two great tastes in one candy bar." The same can be said about the Peterson brothers, Lamont and Anthony, two great talents in one family. Before a big, sweltering crowd at the D.C. Armory that included pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather and the District's mayor, Adrian Fenty, older brother Lamont Peterson, 138, Washington, D.C., gradually wore down the game but outgunned veteran Brown, 140, Atlantic City, New Jersey, scoring an eighth-round technical knockout, inching Peterson closer to a major title shot.

During the fighter introductions, several of the 23-year-old Peterson's gym buddies in his corner stared over at Brown, repeating "this is gonna be easy!" But those who have seen "The Eastern Beast" know his diminutive size hides a giant's ticker. The New Jersey fighter may be way past his prime, having gone 0-6-2 in his last eight bouts, but he gave Peterson more than one reminder that he was there to make it a fight. It must be said that Brown buried his mother just the day before, so he was fighting with a heavy heart.

Brown, 35, has gone the distance with the likes of Miguel Cotto and the late Diego Corrales, and tried to get off to a fast start, but his shots were wider and slower than Peterson's. Peterson, 21-0 (9) showed good bodywork with both hands early, particularly with the left hook. Peterson, picked up the pace in the second with five straight lefts and an uppercut to Brown's head that elicited oohs from the crowd. Brown, 23-13-1 (11), gained the Washingtonian's attention with an overhand right in the third, but Peterson went uppercut crazy, backing Brown up with both hands. Peterson appeared to take a break during the first half of the fourth before exploding near the end of the round with a two-handed flurry to the head in Brown's own corner that appeared to hurt the visitor for the first time.

The fifth saw Brown surprise Peterson with a counter left hook upstairs, but Peterson, unfazed, followed with combos to

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Brown ducks into a right from Peterson

the body and chopping rights downward on the 5'3" Brown. Both combatants were hard at it in the sixth, a head-snapping right by Brown being his best punch of the fight, but he paid for it with more bodyblows from Peterson that finally began slowing him down. A seventh round of hellacious Peterson bodyshots put Brown in retreat, looking discouraged, and finished the job in the eighth, sending him reeling into the ropes with an onslaught of rights and lefts before referee Kenny Chevalier (USA) pulled the plug at the 0:28 mark.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **PMG Boxing**
(5-25-07)
Mike Greenhill

Anthony Peterson KO 8 Luis Ernesto Jose

Washington, D.C.: The Peterson brothers normally perform as a package deal, and after brother Lamont took care of John Brown, it was Anthony's turn to show his stuff at the D.C. Armory, the siblings' first show as headliners in their hometown.

Peterson, 134½, Washington, D.C., was perceived as the slightly less talented of the two brothers at the beginnings of their careers, but if he's still number two in the family, the gap has narrowed quickly if not completely. Anthony, 23-0 (16), certainly seems the harder puncher of the two, gaining fans with his power. On this night he added Jose to his collection of wins inside the distance, matching brother Lamont's eight-round win in the same time frame.

Little was known before the bout about Jose, 134, as it was the southpaw's first foray into the States. Peterson would soon realize he was not to be taken lightly. The southpaw from La Romana, Dominican Republic, actually had the gall to trade with Peterson early on, and though his shots did not quite match the snap of his American foe, they had enough oomph to make the fight entertaining. Peterson, 22, took a counter left or two in the opening rounds as well as some bodyblows, but responded with those trademark Peterson family bodyshots, particularly with left hooks, matching Jose in work rate.

Jabs were not plentiful on the CompuBox computer, as both athletes stayed at close quarters for most of the night. Peterson appeared to be loading up for powerpunches, landing two good rights upstairs in the third. Jose, 27-5-2 (24), took them well, scoring at times with lead lefts. Peterson finished the round with two left hooks that moved the Latino back just before the bell. He hurt Jose visibly with bodyshots in the fourth and doubled up on his punches in the fifth and sixth, turning the tide in the unbeaten prospect's favor irrevocably.

In the seventh, Peterson buckled Jose's knees with a textbook left hook to the head, forcing him to hold on. As the fight wore on, Jose, 31, was grasping more often as well as using his head in clinches, prompting two warnings from referee Malik Waleed (USA) but no deduction. Peterson made sure it didn't matter, wobbling Jose badly with a counter right, then pounding him to the head with a flurry in the corner; only the bell saved Jose. But he started the eighth in sorry shape, and Peterson finished the job. A short left hook enfeebled Jose,

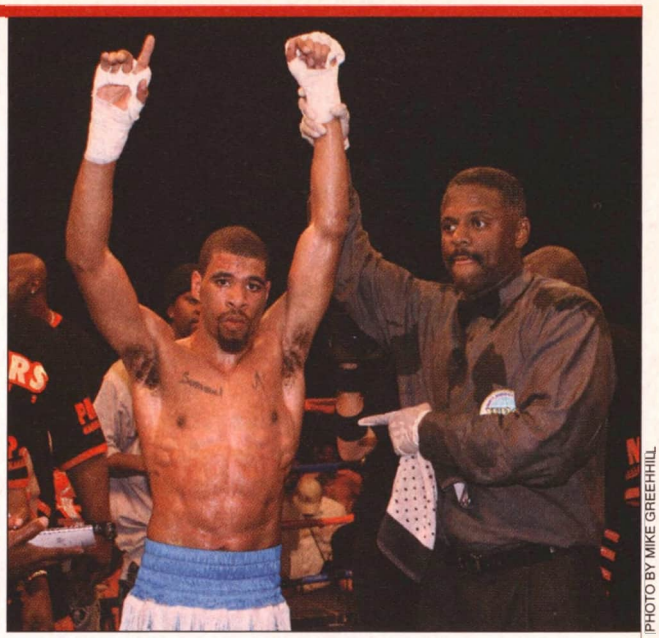


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Anthony Peterson has his arm raised for the 23rd consecutive time

leaving him wide open for a four-punch flurry that put him down in his own corner. Waleed waved it off at the 1:36 mark without counting, as Jose kneeled with one arm on the ropes.

Peterson is rated number one in the WBO 135-pound rankings (not that he's beaten anyone of high enough quality to justify that ranking, but when has that ever stopped an alphabet group before?), and at the rate he and Lamont are going, we could very well see two title belts in the same family.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **PMG Boxing**
(5-25-07)
Mike Greenhill

Ulises Solis KO 9 Jose Antonio Aguirre

Guadalajara, Mexico: Though Hugo Cazares is the recognized world champion at 108 pounds, IBF beltholder Solis is making a fairly compelling case as his top contender. In his fourth defense of the belt he won against Will Grigsby in January '06, Solis, 108, added former strawweight titlist Aguirre, 108, Tabasco, Mexico, to his ledger of victims in a one-sided contest at Auditorio Benito Juarez in Solis' hometown.

Aguirre is trained by Jose Morales and managed by Erik Morales, and, like his manager, his fighting career is rapidly winding down, this marking his fourth loss in five fights. The 25-year-old Solis dominated Aguirre, 31, from the outset. He floored the challenger twice in the fourth round, and continued dishing out a beating until referee Jesus Salcedo (Mexico) finally saw fit to halt the carnage 30 seconds into the ninth round, immediately after Aguirre, 34-6-1 (20), took his third spill to the canvas.

With the win, Solis advanced to 24-1-2 (18). If fans of the little guys are lucky, he'll advance to a showdown with Cazares as well.

Promoter: **Promociones Zanfer**
(5-19-07) ■

(Continued from Page 24)

"Objectively, of course, you have to write it the way you see it. But you really want to see a kid like that make it. He hasn't been in any trouble since he was released from jail. He's literally fighting for his kids' lives. It's hard not to root for somebody like that."

The clink had a transformation effect on Crawford. When he was released after just 20 months for good behavior, Crawford re-entered the world with a newfound maturity. He was even more soft-spoken, more intense. But what Nasser remembers as a sometimes-uncontrollable rage in the young man had been tamed, almost as if he'd left it behind the prison walls.

"It made me more confident," Crawford said. "Just seeing how life is so precious, especially how freedom is so precious."

Crawford "saw a lot of bad s___" when he was locked up. He spent most of his first days sleeping in his bunk. "That was my first time, so I was stressed out," said Crawford, who had two kids at the time. "Missing my family, my kids. Going in scared, like, what are they gonna do to me?"

Some of the best advice Crawford will ever receive came from a cellmate who told him: "Don't let the time do you; you do the time." Crawford took the advice. He kept his mind occupied and his body out of trouble by reading books, lifting weights, keeping to himself. The 20 months, he said, went by like nothing.

"He had a very negative upbringing," Nasser said. "His mother died at a young age. He really didn't have nobody to help him out. He always had a negative attitude about life. Then, going into jail, he saw some of the people in there and it made him more positive, believe it or not. It made him want to not go back in there. It made him appreciate life."

After being released, boxing was the last thing on Crawford's mind. He figured he'd been out of the sport too long to accomplish anything, so he focused on getting his job back at the supermarket, on taking care of his family. But his passion was ignited a couple of months later while watching an otherwise forgettable fight card on TV. "I thought, *I could beat these guys*," he said.

Crawford returned to the gym a larger, stronger fighter who no longer slapped with his punches. Competing at 152 pounds, he cruised to the 2004 National Golden Gloves title match, losing a decision to Daniel Jacobs on NBC. Crawford made his pro debut that September, winning a four-round decision against Luis Sanchez.

Fearing it might hurt Crawford's chances of landing a major promoter, Nasser advised his fighter to turn down an early offer of $3,000 per month from a deep-pocketed investor who wanted to be his manager. In his fourth pro bout, Crawford earned a deal with New Jersey-based Main Events by outpointing Philadelphia prospect Phillip McCants on the Arturo Gatti-James Leija undercard.

Main Events didn't put a contract in front of Crawford, however, until he won two more fights. That included a near-shutout of Alex Viramontes, who had a kayo win against Olympian David Jackson.

Crawford has fought only two opponents with losing records. In January of 2006, he showed heart when he got up from an early knockdown and dominated Luis Armando Santos en route to a six-round technical decision.

"That was the fight that let me know that this kid could fight," Idec said, "that if

Referee Wayne Hedgepeth gets between Crawford and Luis Santos, who is bleeding profusely from a gash over his left eye. The fight was stopped in the sixth round with Crawford, who was ahead on all there scorecards, winning via technical decision.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

he faced some adversity he could answer it."

The biggest knock against Crawford has been what many feel is a lack of power. Other welter prospects, such as Berto and Joel Julio, have gotten more exposure largely as a result of their ability to excite. "I feel my name should be up there too," Crawford said.

He's scored seven knockouts and several knockdowns in his 16 pro fights. On the Marco Antonio Barrera-Rocky Juarez II undercard last September, Crawford delivered an off-TV, 12-second kayo of Adam Wynant. It's the second quickest stoppage in Nevada history, and it came not long after then-Main Events Vice President Carl Moretti told Crawford he wasn't exciting enough.

"He leaned over the ropes, and yelled to Moretti. 'That's what the f__k you want?'" Nasser recalled. "Even I was shocked about what he did to Wynant."

Crawford and Nasser said they're happy with their promoter, though. They were offered an HBO *Boxing After Dark* fight with Berto last September, but Nasser said the $25,000 purse wasn't enough. "He didn't talk to me for two weeks because I didn't take the fight," said Nasser, who sees Crawford blossoming into a contender sometime next year. As this issue went to press, he was scheduled to fight on the July 14 Gatti-Alfonso Gomez card.

In the meantime, Nasser landed a co-manager named Lenny Wisse, who is helping with training expenses. But Crawford remains a nighttime fixture at Foodtown in Haledon, New Jersey, where he ponders what life might be like with paydays that will allow him simply to concentrate on boxing.

"You have a lot of prima donnas out there," Nasser said. "Henry's not even close to that. Henry knows that if he doesn't do it in boxing, he's got nowhere else to go. He's not taking any shortcuts. He's doing everything hard."

And, nowadays, everything right. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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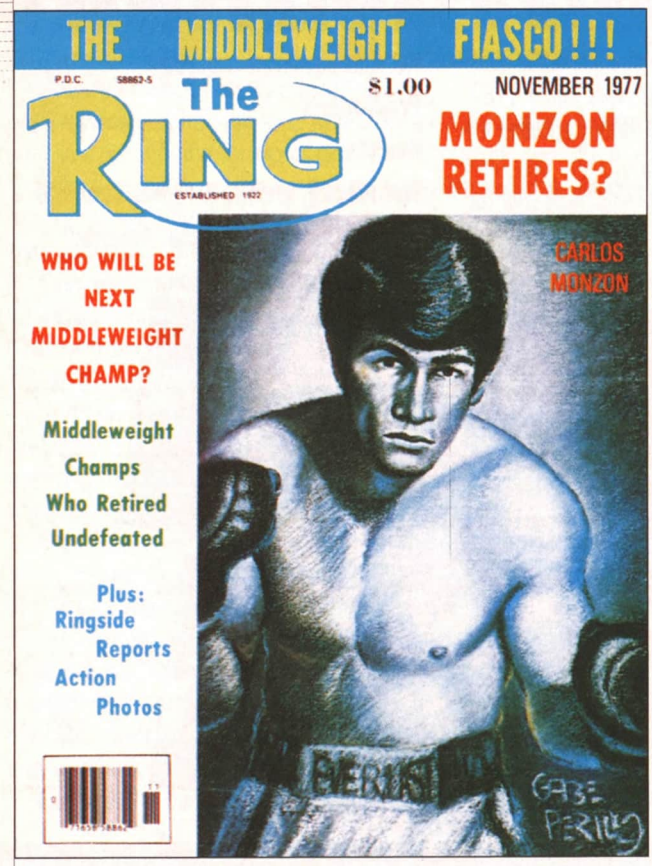


COVER STORY "Monzon Retires" was more than a single story. All told, there are five articles in this issue related to Monzon's retirement:

"Monzon-Valdes II Confirms Monzon's Supremacy" by European correspondent Jack Tree is an account of the Argentinean's then-record-setting 14th defense of the 160-pound title, which was also the final bout of his Hall of Fame career. Monzon survived a second-round knockdown to win a unanimous 15-round decision over his hard-hitting Colombian challenger in a bout held in Monte Carlo.

"One consolation for Valdes," wrote Tree. "If Monzon does retire, Rodrigo Valdes is then the best middleweight in the world."

"Who Will Be The Next Middleweight King" by John Ort provides thumbnail sketches of the top-10 contenders: Valdes, Bennie Briscoe, Marvin Hagler, Alan Minter, Vito Antuofermo, Mike Colbert, David Love, Ronnie Harris, Bobby Watts, and Casey Gacic. Over the coming years, four of them—Valdes, Antuofermo, Minter, Hagler—would win the crown, but Valdes had the honor of being "next."

"Middle Age Is Still Golden As Briscoe Eyes Chance At Crown" by Nigel Collins compares the 34-year-old Philadelphia slugger to other fighters who fought successfully late in their careers and also speculates on Briscoe's chances of replacing Monzon, with whom he already fought a draw and lost a decision.

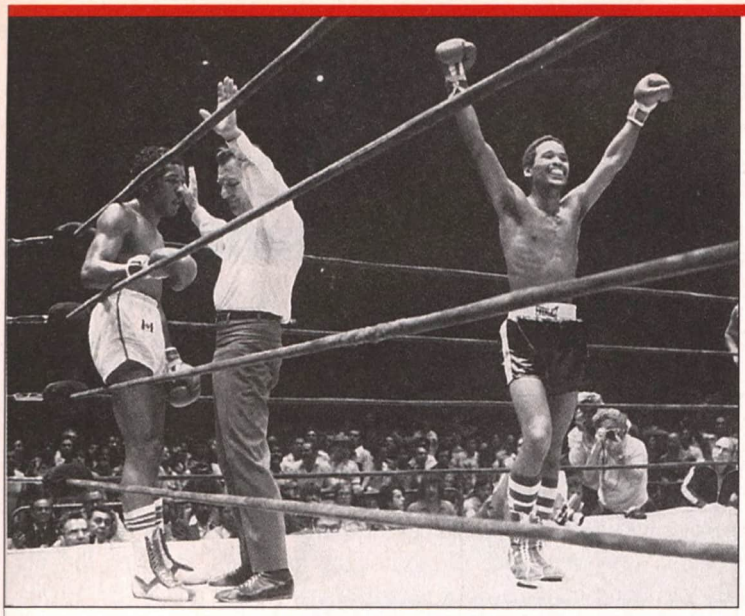
"Whether or not Briscoe can win the middleweight title remains to be seen," wrote Collins, "but the fact that he can still rumble toe-to-toe with the best young studs in the division cannot be denied. Respected names such as Eddie Gregory (later known as Eddie Mustafa Muhammad), Cyclone Hart, Karl Vinson, and Jean Mateo have all gone down to defeat under Briscoe's hammer-like fists lately."

Briscoe met Valdes for the vacant title shortly after this issue went on sale, and lost a 15-round decision.

World Champions

Heavyweight: Muhammad Ali
Light Heavyweight: vacant
Middleweight: vacant
Junior Middleweight: Eddie Gazo
Welterweight: Carlos Palomino
Junior Welterweight: Wilfred Benitez
Lightweight: Roberto Duran
Junior Lightweight: Samuel Serrano
Featherweight: vacant
Bantamweight: Alfonso Zamora
Flyweight: Miguel Canto

Valdes attacks Monzon during the Argentinean's final fight



Benitez celebrates finally stopping Chavez

"Middleweight Champions Who Retired Undefeated" by Trudie Loubet has a misleading headline, as it catalogues not middleweight champs who "retired undefeated," but rather those who never lost the title in the ring. Stanley Ketchel, for instance, was still champ when he was shot to death. Others, including Mickey Walker and Bob Fitzsimmons, relinquished the belt to move up in weight. Tommy Ryan, however, was still technically middleweight champ when he retired, even though he hadn't defended in more than five years and certainly wasn't "undefeated."

The fifth piece is a photo essay of Monzon's career.

"Benitez Wins, But Arguello Steal Thunder On Garden Card" by former radio broadcaster Sam Taub examines a doubleheader that attracted 11,236 customers to MSG to see four Latino boxers battle it out in the hope of securing a fight with lightweight champion Roberto Duran.

WBA junior welter titleholder Wilfred Benitez, who had to shed seven pounds the day of the fight, struggled to catch slippery Venezuelan Jose Guerrero Chavez. The gifted but undisciplined Puerto Rican finally disposed of the lightly regarded challenger in the 15th round, but was nowhere as impressive as Nicaragua's Alexis Arguello, who destroyed Dominican Jose Fernandez in the first round.

"Not only does [Arguello] deliver the message to his opponents, but he's also one of the most colorful of the current clan," wrote Taub. "The crowd, with many of them coming from out-of-the-way places, went wild about this man. As a belter, he reminded Yours Truly of the way ex-lightweight king Lew Jenkins used to chop them down."

"Duran Steamrolls Diaz" by Ron Tegart chronicles lightweight champion Roberto Duran's one-round blastout of Bernandro Diaz in a non-title bout held in front of more than 6,000 fans in Panama City, Panama. Duran was originally supposed to defend the 135-pound title against Edwin Viruet, but when Viruet pulled out, Diaz, a virtually unknown Dominican, was brought in for a bit of target practice.

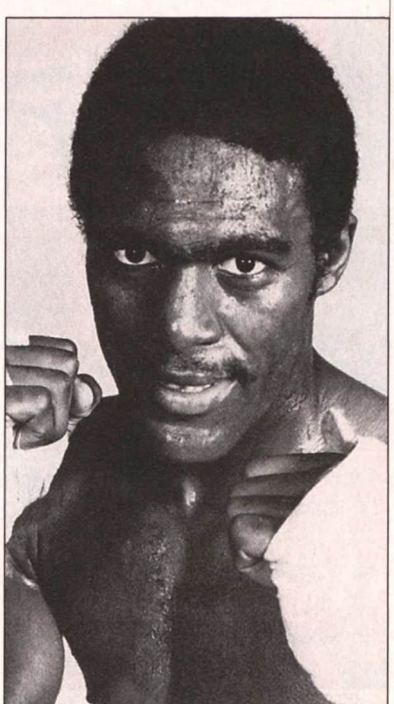
"Kirkman Halts Ron Stander In Seven" by correspondent Kelly Nicholson details local hero Boone Kirkman's TKO of Stander at the Seattle (Washington) Center Arena.

Even though both heavyweights were past their best, 4,056 turned out to watch the pair of old warhorses slug it out. Stander mounted his usual swarming attack, but Kirkman's counter rights had taken control of the match when it was halted due to a nasty cut over Stander's right eye.

Even though he was victorious and also won his next two bouts, Kirkman retired early the next year. Stander, however, had 18 more fights, losing most of them, before finally quitting in July 1982.

"Furuyama Upset By Curry" is Joe Koizumi's account of American junior welterweight Bruce Curry's fifth-round knockout of Tetsuo "Lion" Furuyama in Tokyo, Japan. Curry, in only his 13th pro outing, survived a wobbly fourth round to floor veteran Furuyama twice in the fifth, the second time for the 10-count.

"South Africa Ring News" by Ed Clark features Doug Lumley's upset of Elijah "Tap Tap' Makhathini over 12 rounds in Durban for the South African middleweight title. A crowd of 9,500 at the West Ridge Park Tennis Stadium was shocked when Lumley, with only 10 pro fights under his belt, came on strong late in the fight to decision the 45-fight veteran. ■



Curry made a name for himself in Japan

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

The Truth About Long-Term Brain Damage

As a neurologist who has worked in boxing for more than 14 years, I am repeatedly asked about the frequency of brain injury and concussion. Like many other boxing physicians, I debate that with all the improvements in ringside medicine and postfight care, things have changed. We argue that Parkinson's syndrome, which has plagued fighters like Freddie Roach and Muhammad Ali, and that Dementia Pugilisitica, which affected fighters like Floyd Patterson and Jerry Quarry are becoming things of the past.

But is this true, or just a rationalization made by physicians ignoring criticism from colleagues who continue to question boxing's existence? Moreover, do we know anything more now that is helping to prevent brain damage in boxers?

When the head is struck, the brain moves violently within the skull. Damage can occur to the brain cells and cerebral blood vessels. A concussion is a temporary disruption in brain function. At one time, the presence or absence of consciousness, amnesia, or confusion would predict the severity of the concussion and recovery time. In fact, grading a concussion has interfered with our understanding, resulting in limited follow-up assessment of fighters by commissions.

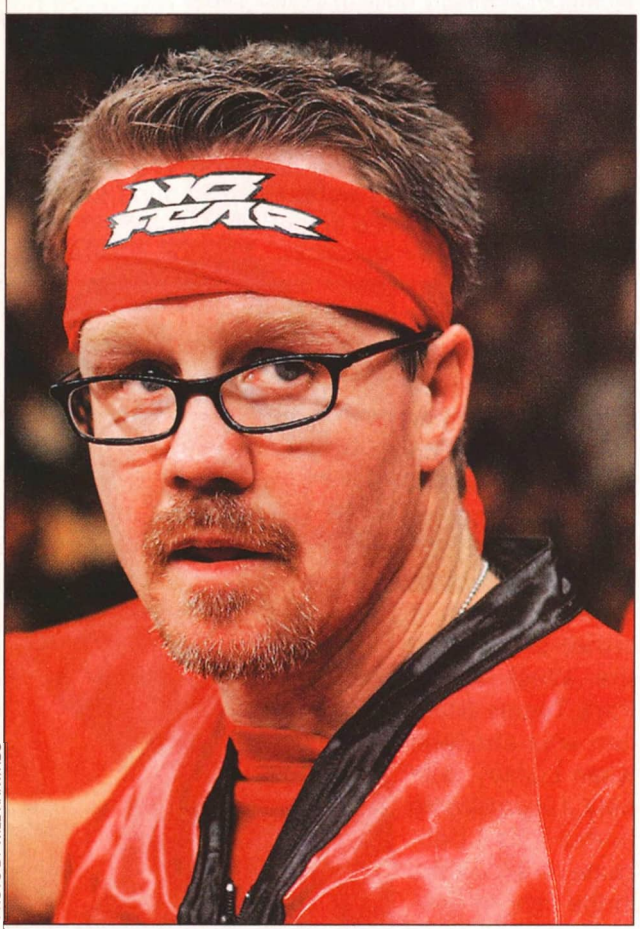


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Roach believes boxing probably caused his Parkinson's syndrome

Symptoms of a concussion can include confusion, memory loss, headache, dizziness, and visual disturbances. It does not require loss of consciousness.

UCLA neurobiologist Dr. David Hovda has researched the physiology of brain injury for years, studying rodents and humans. In a recent *Men's Health* article, Dr. Hovda noted, "We found that a person with a mild concussion has the same memory loss as someone who is knocked unconscious. There is nothing mild about mild traumatic brain injury."

Dr. Hovda's studies demonstrated that a concussion causes the brain to be flooded with an excess of potassium and calcium ions that can cause brain damage. The primary energy source for the brain is glucose (sugar), which counteracts the influx of these ions. But in a concussion there is a hypermetabolism along with reduced cerebral blood flow. This further increases the susceptibility of the brain to subsequent injury.

He also studied the effects of repeated injury on rats' brains. Double concussion separated by as much as five hours showed increased brain cell loss. Ongoing nerve cell damage has been reported in humans as long as two-to-four weeks after the initial insult. Therefore, could a fighter conceivably suffer more than one concussion during the course of a fight?

Age is also important, and there are implications for amateur boxers. Trauma to a developing brain may have long-lasting problems, necessitating in-depth monitoring of children and adolescents who have suffered a concussion.

A study recently published in the 2006 *Archives Of Neurology* by Swedish researchers examined cerebral spinal fluid from 11 male and three female amateur boxers with an average age of 22. Fighters that had sustained fewer than 15 blows to the head showed markers for brain cell damage when compared to non-athletes. Think about how many punches the average fighter absorbs per bout!

The NFL has been conducting research programs on concussion for years, but little has come about to determine the length of time required for an athlete to recover or how long an injured brain is vulnerable to re-injury.

Chris Nowinski, a former Harvard football player and WWE star, ended his career after repeated concussions resulting in chronic headaches and depression, recently authored the book, *Head Games: Football's Concussion*

Crisis. He contends that organizations such as the NFL have refused to acknowledge the depth of brain injury in football players. Dr. Julian Bailes, director for the Center for the Study of Retired Athletes and Chairman of the Neurosurgery Department at West Virginia University, surveyed more than 2,500 former football players. He found that those who had sustained three or more concussions were three times more likely to suffer severe memory problems and five times more likely to develop early onset of Alzheimer's disease.

Are Haugen's mood swings and depression boxing-related?

Boxing, where little research has been conducted, is state controlled, meaning that each commission may follow different standards. There are acceptable recommendations regarding how long a fighter should take off between fights if he suffers a technical knockout or knockout, but what about all the countless blows a fighter absorbs in sparring and during a fight? What are the repercussions of these punches? Are fighters experiencing undiagnosed minor concussions on a frequent basis and, therefore, allowed to compete again before their brain has sufficiently recovered?

Part of this problem stems from the fact that the diagnosis is often too difficult to make during and immediately after a fight. Few baseline cognitive tests are done to use as a comparison to determine if a fighter's symptoms are new, transient, or long-term. Furthermore, fighters travel from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and are lost to long-term follow-up. No one, including those serving in a regulatory capacity on a commission, wants to exclude a fighter from making a living unless it can be proven he is suffering from cognitive decline. By that time, it is too late.

Diagnostic testing of the brain, such as MRI or CT, is rarely abnormal in the case of concussion. For several years, the NFL has been using computerized neuropsychological testing to determine when an athlete has recovered from a concussion. ImPACT is a research-based software tool that evaluates multiple aspects of cognitive functioning, including memory, brain processing speed, reaction time, and post-concussive symptoms. This type of testing would be extremely valuable in boxing, but has limited potential unless baseline studies are completed at the start of a fighter's career.

Symptoms of chronic brain injury in boxers may not become evident until years after retirement. This exemplifies the importance in educating fighters, trainers, and commission personnel as to the signs and symptoms that indicate a concussion and cognitive decline.

Furthermore, no boxer should ignore the magic of rest. A cut, broken nose, or busted hand are clear-cut reasons for a boxer to not fight or spar, but post-concussive symptoms are not easily visible. They might even present themselves as fatigue or depression.

Former IBF lightweight titleholder Greg Haugen, who retired in 1999 after 53 pro fights, considers himself lucky. "My philosophy was to try to not get hit," he said. "I never felt nauseated or had headaches after a fight, but I knew plenty of guys who did. There were times after a 15-round fight where I felt blurry, but I was fortunate."

Haugen, however, admits to now having mood swings and depression. This speaks to the importance of boxers undergoing follow-up medical evaluations once they have completed their career.

With a great preponderance of boxers having no health insurance, medical care only offered to fighters during and immediately after a bout, and the lack of standardized medical tests from commission to commission, post-concussive symptoms in boxers will continue to be under-diagnosed and frequently overlooked. Boxing needs to go beyond petty concerns over whether or not mixed martial arts is stealing its fan base and concentrate on cleaning up its own house. Boxing people and boxing commissions must expand their compassion and concern for the athletes by advancing standardized medical testing to diagnose concussion and protect the future health and welfare of the participants. ■

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Cotto-Judah Reaction

Although I felt relieved when Miguel Cotto finished Zab Judah in the 11th round, I wish the ref wouldn't have stepped in. The reason I say this is because I knew Judah would bring up it up as an excuse in demanding a rematch. If the ref hadn't stopped it when he did, Cotto would have drilled Zab into the canvas, and Judah wouldn't be asking for a rematch. Still, it was a great fight and both men fought with heart and power. I loved every moment of it.

In regards to everybody wanting a Cotto-Floyd Mayweather fight: I prefer a Cotto versus the winner of Antonio Margarito-Paul Williams. I don't want to see Mayweather fight again, especially after his boring performance against Oscar De La Hoya.

IVAN MONTIEL
Toronto, Ontario

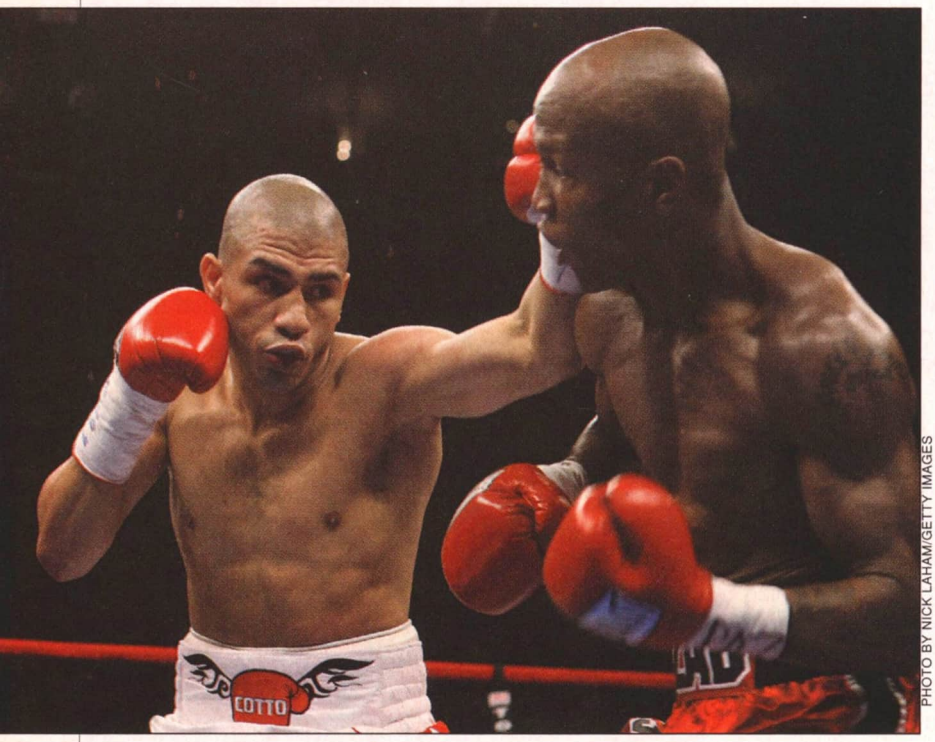


PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Miguel Cotto bangs Zab Judah with a left during their hard-fought bout at Madison Square Garden. Reader Ivan Montiel enjoyed the fight, but wishes Cotto had been allowed to score a clean kayo.

Blinkered & Biased

Welsh reader Cei Smith accused Americans of being "blinkered" and "biased" in the July 2007 issue of "Come Out Writing," and he was just getting warmed up. I wonder what Mr. Smith thought of the referee's third-round stoppage of the Joe Calzaghe-Peter Manfredo Jr. match in Cardiff. Was that a shining example of Welsh objectivity? Or am I so blinkered and biased that I failed to see something? Please enlighten us, Mr. Smith.

JOHN RILEY
Fayetteville, AR

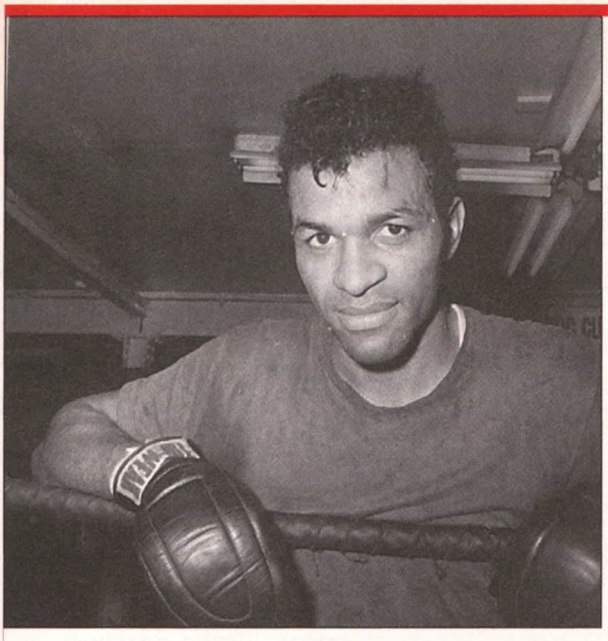
While reader Cei Smith had a point in saying that non-Americans get robbed in America, calling it the worst is questionable. I have yet to see any non-American fighting in the U.S.A. have to go through what Lamon Brewster had to go through when he faced Luan Krasniqi in Germany. When Krasniqi was dropped in round eight, referee Jose Rivera actually stopped counting at nine and waited for Krasniqi to get up.

ERIC WONG
San Francisco, CA

Wonjongkam Undeserving

So when is Pongsaklek Wonjongkam going to lose his undeserved rating at the top of the flyweight class? Sure, with 17 defenses of the title, he's broken a division record, but in that time he's only faced about three or four fighters rated in THE RING's top 10. Doesn't that strike anyone else as a little silly?

If Wonjongkam showed the slightest inclination to fight the best opposition available, then your magazine's mandate that he must be part of any title fight would be a little more defensible, but in Vic Darchinyan's six title defenses, he's



Former welterweight contender Clyde Gray was not among the top Canadian fighters of the past featured in a recent RING article, which prompted reader Rick Pommells to write in praise of the man who once went 15 rounds with Jose Napoles.

fought three fighters ranked by THE RING at the time of their fight. C'mon, guys. Quantity doesn't matter that much, does it?

LAWRENCE DONNELLY
pucklptmd@hotmail.com

Don't Forget Clyde

Thanks for an excellent job on Canadian fighters in the July 2007 issue of THE RING ("O'Canada: Boxing's Resurgence In The Great White North") by Paul Salgado. I would like to add Clyde Gray to the list of top Canadian fighters of the past. Gray was a welterweight from Toronto who fought for the title three times. He went 15 rounds with Jose Napoles in one of those fights. Overall, Clyde compiled a pro record of 69-19-1 (48) between 1968 and 1980.

RICK POMMELLS
Edmonton, Alberta

Not Everybody Was Unhappy

I have been a reader of THE RING magazine for the last 22 years and look forward to my copy every month. I watched the recent Oscar De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather fight live on Sky TV. It was the first fight for many years that gave me a tingle of excitement during the weeks and months leading up to it.

Congratulations to HBO for the in-depth *24/7* programs, which showed how much hard work both fighters put in. Also, congratulations to both fighters for giving their all in a fight that lived up to its billing. I was rooting for De La Hoya, but was not disappointed with the judges' decision. I look forward to your magazine's view of the fight and hope it is not too long before a major fight gets me buzzing with anticipation again

SCOTT HINTON
West Bromwich, England

Joe's For Real

Having purchased your magazine for the past seven months, I agree with most of what is written. But when are you going to realize that Joe Calzaghe is the real deal? I'm sure you still won't give him what he deserves when Joe takes care of Mikkel Kessler in Denmark. I think THE RING should show your 168-pound champion a bit of appreciation and put him on the cover.

DIG HEGARTY
Northern Ireland

[Editor's note: Calzaghe was the cover subject of the British edition of the July 2006 issue of THE RING.]

Double Standard

What the hell is going on? Edwin Valero can't get licensed to fight in the United States, but Tommy Morrison can, even after testing positive for HIV. Go figure.

DANIEL ZLAMAL
goldenchild_2626@yahoo.com

A Little Respect, Please

Why did William Dettloff feel compelled to slam Mary Jo Sanders and Valerie Mahfood's recent bout on ESPN2 in "TV Fights Of The Month" as not being worthy of being a main event? On top of that, he referred to them as "chicks." I saw that bout, and it was more exciting than the all-male fights that preceded it. Mahfood has been in the ring with Ann Wolfe, whom she beat in 2000. Sanders won against Chevelle Hallback and Belinda Laracuente, and is eyeing Laila Ali for a match. Both women are good fighters. Please give respect where it is due.

HILLARI HUNTER
Chicago, IL■

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Undefeated WBA junior lightweight Edwin Valero is banned from fighting in the United States due to an old head injury, but HIV positive Tommy Morrison recently fought in West Virginia. Reader Daniel Zlamal finds this strange.

[Looking Ahead]

By Joe Santoliquito

Calderon Moves Up To Challenge Cazares

PHOTO BY ROB DELORENZO

Cazares is hoping to bring attention to the 108-pound class

It's been over a decade since American fight fans could identify with the 108-pound class. The last junior flyweight that merited widespread appeal and serious dollars was **Michael Carbajal**, the former IBF 108-pound titlist who had his final fight in 1999.

Jumpstarted by his 1988 Olympic success in Seoul, South Korea, and some clever promoting by **Bob Arum**, Carbajal was a tiny sensation in the early-1990s, the first million-dollar junior flyweight.

Now there's another junior fly with star potential in RING world champion **Hugo Cazares**, who is working hard to create new interest in the 108-pounders. To that end, Cazares, 25-3-1 (19), is about to give Puerto Rican fight fans a special treat when he takes on undefeated local hero **Ivan Calderon** on August 25, at the Ruben Rodriguez Coliseum, in Bayamon, Puerto Rico.

The slick-boxing Calderon, 28-0 (6), is ranked number one by THE RING at 105 pounds, but his lack of punching power could be a major problem, especially considering it will be the first time since 2003 that Calderon will be venturing north of the strawweight division.

Calderon scored a 10-round decision over winless **Juan Carlos Perez** on March 7, 2003, the last time "Iron Boy" weighed more than 105 for a fight. Moreover, his most recent kayo came more than a year ago, when he vanquished **Miguel Tellez** in the third round, on April 29, 2006.

Cazares, meanwhile, has shown plenty of firepower recently. The champ is on a five-fight kayo streak and has stopped six of his last eight foes.

"El Incredible" will not only bring a heavy punch into the ring, but he'll also employ an unorthodox style in which he is prone to switch from a southpaw to conventional stance. In Cazares' most recent outing, on May 4 in Las Vegas, he made quick work of overmatched **Wilfrido Perez**, knocking him out 25 seconds into the second round.

Cazares has no qualms about fighting in his challenger's homeland. "I don't have any problem in going to Puerto Rico," said the Mexican. "I already fought 'Nene' Sanchez and Nelson Dieppa there, and I beat them."

Marquez-Barrios Set For September

Mexico's **Juan Manuel Marquez**, 47-3-1 (35), will defend the WBC super featherweight belt that he won from **Marco Antonio Barrera**, in March, when he battles Argentina's **Jorge Barrios**, 47-3-1 (34), on September 15 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, to be televised by HBO Pay-Per-View.

The wild-swinging Barrios is counting on this September working out better for him than September '06, when he lost the WBO 130-pound strap on the scales—then in the ring—to **Joan Guzman**. In his only bout since then, "La Heina" stopped **Decho Bankluaygym** in the second round of a bout held in Buenos Aires.

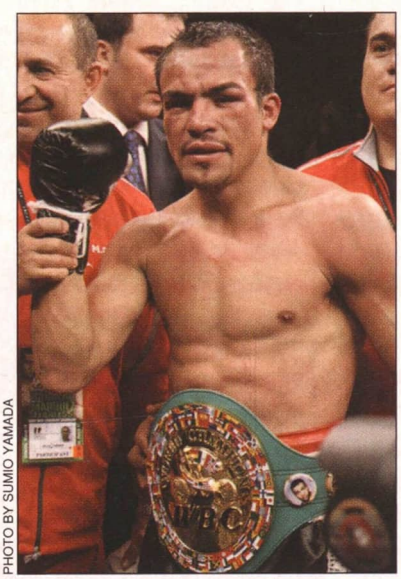


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Marquez could use an emphatic victory over Barrios

In Barrios, Marquez may have the perfect foil with whom to display his considerable skill—someone who will come right at him, face-first, seeking to engage. And that's good news for the fans, who can expect a lively encounter due to the fighters' contrasting but complementary styles.

Listen Up

August appears to be an exciting month. On August 11, at the Arco Arena, in Sacramento, California, **Jhonny Gonzalez** will be looking for his second straight victory against yet another grizzled veteran when he takes on Filipino **Gerry Penalosa**. Gonzalez, 34-5 (29), sent **Irene Pacheco** into retirement in his last fight, scoring a ninth-round TKO in late-March. It was Gonzalez' first comeback fight after suffering a 10th-round TKO himself to then-RING junior featherweight world champion **Israel Vazquez**, in September 2006. Penalosa, 51-6-2 (34), heads into the bout looking for a little redemption himself. In his last outing, he lost a controversial 12-round decision to hard-punching **Daniel Ponce De Leon**, on March 17, 2007 ... Speaking of Ponce De Leon, he'll be in the co-feature on the Gonzalez-Penalosa card, facing undefeated **Rey Bautista**, 23-0 (17). Ponce De Leon, 31-1 (28), and Bautista have similar styles, and the mix has the potential to be the fight of the night. Bautista, another Filipino, has stopped seven of his last nine opponents, while Ponce De Leon has stopped five his last seven. ■

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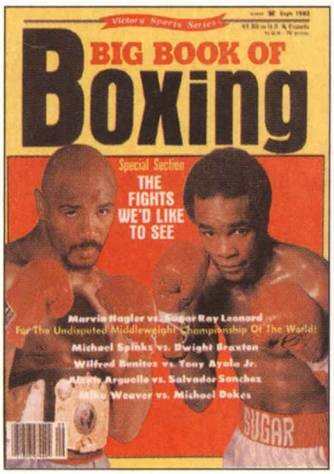

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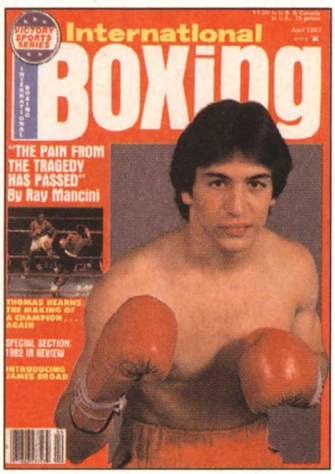

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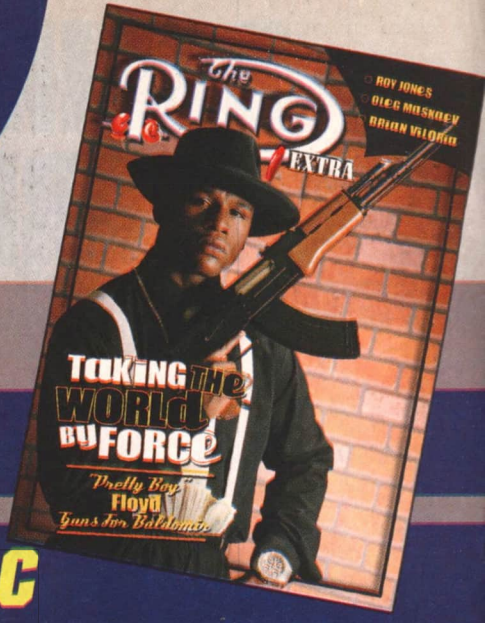

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